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*'Out of all classical  
instruments the guitar  
is the most accessible'*  
Miloš

**NEW MUSIC FOR THE  
LONDON OLYMPICS**  
Composer Sally Beamish  
unites harmony and heroism

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LONDON OLYMPICS**  
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unites harmony and heroism

**DMITRI HVOROSTOVSKY  
SINGS RACHMANINOV**  
Joining the Russian baritone  
as he records in Moscow





# Simon Rattle/BPO

## Bruckner 9



Sir Simon Rattle conducts the Berliner Philharmoniker in Anton Bruckner's Symphony No. 9 including the world premiere of the latest scholarly revision of the fourth movement, left unfinished at his death. On the day Bruckner died he had completed and orchestrated one third of the movement and sketched the layout for the entire finale. This new realisation, the result of 25 years of scholarship, was unveiled at Berlin's Philharmonie in early February 2012 and at New York's Carnegie Hall the same month.

### Other titles to look out for



#### HJ Lim

Young pianist HJ Lim takes on one of the most monumental challenges in classical music, the complete Beethoven piano sonatas. In this 8-CD set the sonatas are curated by HJ into eight themes, including The Eternal Feminine, Assertion of an Inflexible Personality and Resignation and Action. As the pianist herself explains *'A theoretical analysis of Beethoven's sonatas has been done many times; my own emphasizes rather the emotional, human, spiritual and psychological.'*



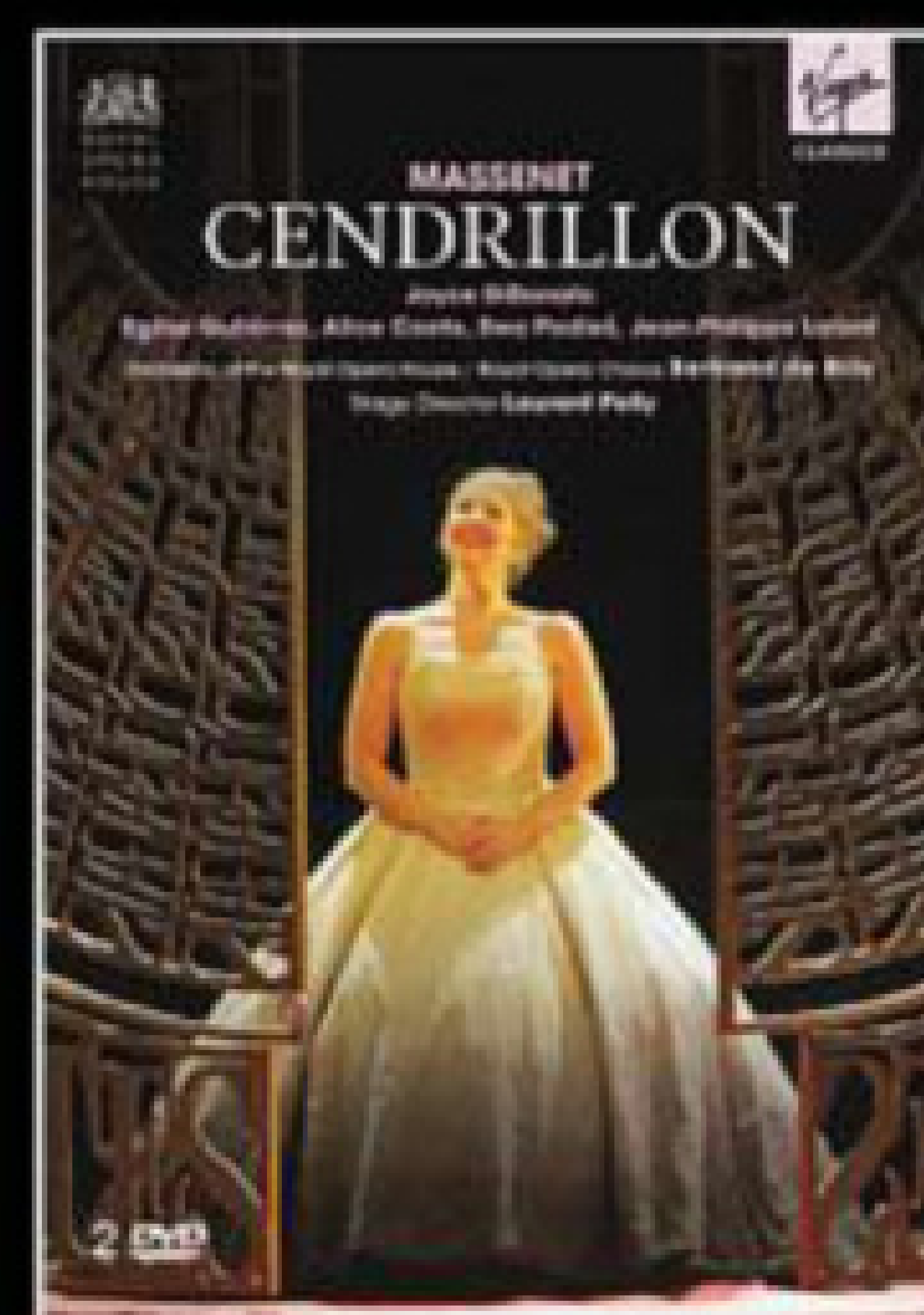
#### Jacqueline Du Pré

Jacqueline du Pré's career, though tragically brief, coincided with a golden age of recording. This 17-disc treasury unites her entire EMI Classics legacy and includes – for the first time on CD – two Bach sonata movements from her 1962 debut recital for the label. This collection includes the very latest Abbey Road remasters of Du Pré's recordings in one definitive boxset and offers the listener the ultimate listening experience with a fantastic clarity of sound and dynamic range.



#### Martha Argerich

EMI Classics is pleased to release the latest instalment of highlights from the Martha Argerich Project at the Lugano Festival. This is the ninth annual 3-CD set celebrating the musical fruits of a project in which young artists join seasoned performers, including Martha Argerich herself, to explore wide-ranging chamber music and orchestral repertoire, both well known and rarely heard. The CDs, recorded in the summer of 2011, are being released in anticipation of the Festival's 2012 season in June.



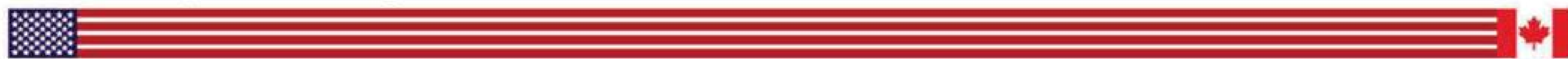
#### Massenet : Cendrillon

The Cinderella story seen through the eyes of the *belle époque*, Massenet's *Cendrillon* was first performed at the Opéra-Comique in Paris in 1899 and its gorgeous score embraces pathos, pastiche, broad humour, subtle eroticism and sheer magic. In Summer 2011 its debut at London's Royal Opera House was built around mezzo soprano Joyce DiDonato, who first took on the title role at the Santa Fe festival in 2006.



# Sounds of America

Gramophone's guide to the classical scene in the US and Canada



**Focus** Igudesman and Joo - page I » **The Scene** Musical highlights - page IV » **Recording reviews** - page IX



Aleksey Igudesman (left) and Hyung-ki Joo have been striking musical and comedy sparks off each other since they met at the Menuhin School when they were 12

## RIP-ROARING LAUGHS WITH MONTY MOZART

Musical comedy is easy to get wrong but violin-piano duo Igudesman and Joo seem to be landing on the right side of the funny/unfunny divide. This year they have their sights set on a US tour – but have they got what it takes? Jeremy Nicholas finds out

Their idols are Victor Borge, Dudley Moore, PDQ Bach, Monty Python – and Mozart. They've been touring their show *A Little Nightmare Music* since 2004. And when I was first introduced to Igudesman and Joo via the web (years before YouTube), it was through footage of a clever routine involving blocks of wood and Rachmaninov's C sharp minor Prelude. Very slick. Very funny.

Then there was a 2006 DVD of their full show shot in the Musikverein in Vienna. This was more hit-and-miss. Aleksey Igudesman was clearly a whiz on the violin, Hyung-ki Joo obviously knew his way around the piano. It was different, it was amusing – but some sketches went on too long, others had no focus, and others still were simply not terribly good. They sorely needed someone to pull the show into shape and raise it above the level of a student review. The biggest pluses were: a) the show was largely visual and so could be taken to any country in the world; b) Igudesman and Joo were born performers with bags of charm; and c) like all great double acts, they were chalk and cheese.

Fast forward to March 2012 and the Cadogan Hall, the venue for their London debut. Normally I run a mile from anything described as 'madcap' or linked to Monty Python ('Madcap Musical Virtuosi'... 'Mozart hijacked by Monty Python' says the press release). Normally it guarantees tolerant smiles and raised eyebrows. Not these two. Six years and 28 million hits on YouTube later, boy, have they come on.

storemags.com

PHOTOGRAPHY: JULIA WESELY



# GLORIOUS BEETHOVEN



Beethoven's unusual cantata *Der glorreiche Augenblick* is filled with patriotic praise for Vienna and tributes to the kings and princes of Europe after the defeat of Napoleon.

This remarkable and distinctive piece is rarely performed and seldom recorded, and its appearance on Naxos with such distinguished forces as the RPO and Hilary Davan Wetton makes it an obvious choice for seekers of fresh Beethoven material.

Naxos is 25 this year and to celebrate we will be offering a different free download and 25% off sale every month.  
For more details please go to [www.classicsonline.com](http://www.classicsonline.com)

# MAGNIFICENT BARTÓK



Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra* is one of his greatest works, and a brilliant display vehicle for the instrumental virtuosity of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra.

Acclaimed conductor Marin Alsop has an impressive Bartók pedigree: "Alsop's structural command of [Bartók's music] is absolute, her transitions confident and dramatic." *Independent on Sunday*





*'With classical music and humour, it's often musicians who aren't very good doing comedy that's not very funny' – Aleksey Igudesman*

Now the show is polished and crisp. They work the room, work the laughs and, along the way, demonstrate what remarkable musicians they are. When Joo has his right hand chopped off by the piano lid (a silly mistake on Igudesman's part...or maybe revenge?) we're treated to a magical performance of Scriabin's Nocturne for the Left Hand. Igudesman, for his part, can make his 1717 Santo Seraphin violin sound like Heifetz one moment and Jack Benny the next. They end the evening – not before their Rachmaninov Prelude-with-wood-blocks and I-Will-Survive routines are welcomed by the audience like old friends – with a virtuosic high-speed reprise of all the show's highlights. They tear up the place. Two standing ovations. No wonder big names such as Gidon Kremer, Emanuel Ax, Yo-Yo Ma and Joshua Bell are queuing up to appear with them in other versions of the show.

Igudesman, 38, and Joo, 39, were 12 when they met at the Menuhin School in Stoke d'Abernon, just 20 miles south of Sloane Square where we're having a drink. 'We had great teachers there who inspired us and encouraged us to do our own thing,' says pianist Joo. 'We felt, back even then, that although we loved classical music, its world had very little to do with the spirit in which it was created. We feel that going to a concert often resembles going to a funeral. We wanted to get rid of this whole ceremonial thing and make it more accessible.'

Does this approach really work? Does someone who listens to 'Nessun Dorma' rush out and buy a ticket to *Turandot*? Will an evening with André Rieu lead you to Bruckner? 'We're passionate about the music,' counters Igudesman. 'We don't make fun of the music, we make fun with the music.'

'For us,' Joo interjects, 'the music comes first, then the humour. And we know from the feedback we get that our audiences will, for instance, go out and buy a disc of Rachmaninov after hearing his music for the first time. Or they write and say "I have started to learn the clarinet" or "I've taken up piano lessons again".' The duo are also passionate about their musical workshops '8 to 88 – Musical Education for Children of All Ages'. Here they encourage participants – many of them music students – to loosen up and leave their inhibitions behind. They talk about things like theatricality, improvisation and even how to walk out on stage. 'While you may be able to play the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto,' says Joo, 'you may not have had time to practise your social skills.'

'And a career is at least 50 per cent social skills,' adds Igudesman, who was brought up in Leningrad before the family left for Israel in

1979. Both his parents were musicians: his late father was a respected concertmaster, while his mother teaches piano, currently in Vienna.

Joo's background is less predictable. His parents hail from Korea but in the early '70s came to the UK. His father opened a Korean restaurant (it failed) before becoming a martial arts instructor and later an acupuncturist. Joo had his first piano lesson when he was eight. Only two years later he was sent to the Menuhin School. 'I was kicked around a lot – mainly by this guy.' He looks sideways at his sidekick.

Both established themselves as successful classical musicians before turning full time to comedy in classical music. Joo, who studied further at New York's Manhattan School from 1990-93 and 1997-99, was playing concerts as a soloist, and with his own piano trio, Dimension, appearing at the Wigmore Hall and other venues. Igudesman had a string trio (Triology), recorded for Sony/BMG and composed. 'The job of a classical musician is one of the most difficult,' says Igudesman. 'Not just technically, but psychologically. One is constantly compared with others – not just by critics but by audiences – and much more rigorously than sportsmen, for instance, who can be assessed on the points they score. With a musician it's either "He's awful" or "He's great". We have the incredible privilege of being outside of that. Classical musicians like us because – although violinists, for example, might be jealous of each other – I'm no threat. It's the same with Hyung-ki and pianists.'

They have worked with several directors but primarily direct themselves. 'Of course we recognise the importance of a third eye and ear, so we're always bouncing ideas off others,' says Igudesman. 'We have several very scathing friends whom we trust.' Although they rely very little on the spoken word during a show, they can speak that little in English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian or Korean, depending on where they are. How do people from different countries and cultures react? 'We adapt slightly wherever we are and try to work on several levels at the same time,' says Joo. 'The last thing we want to do is estrange people or do insider jokes for classical musicians. Our prime motivation is actually selfish: we want to make each other laugh.'

As if to prove the point, when I ask Igudesman why so few classical musicians can 'do' humour, he comes up with a bon mot that makes both of them (actually, all three of us) fall about. 'The main problem with classical music and humour is that very often it's musicians who aren't very good doing comedy that's not very funny.' That's the Igudesman and Joo secret: two very good musicians treating music as seriously as they do comedy; two friends who are genuinely generous with each other – and life-enhancing company on and off the stage. **G**

## IN CONCERT AND ONLINE

The duo began 2012 by setting a world record for the Most Dancing Violinists On Stage At One Time, during a UNICEF concert in Vienna hosted by Sir Roger Moore. They're now in the middle of a yearlong, 20-city US tour, which has already included a debut at Carnegie Hall; they join the LA Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl on September 6.

### YOUTUBE HIGHLIGHTS

**Being John Sebastian Bach** John Malkovich directs the duo in a 'religious'/Argentinian version of *Ave Maria* [bit.ly/ffXrwL](http://bit.ly/ffXrwL)

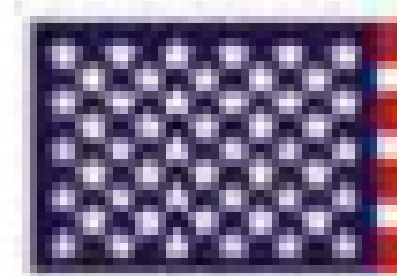
**Manny's Spring Sonata** Emanuel Ax accompanies Igudesman – but Joo isn't too happy about it and makes his feelings clear [bit.ly/9uS1kw](http://bit.ly/9uS1kw)

**Mozart Bond** Mozart's 40th Symphony meets James Bond [youtube.com/watch?v=vvICu1\\_noTc](http://youtube.com/watch?v=vvICu1_noTc)

**Rachmaninov Had Big Hands** Prelude in C sharp minor too difficult to play? Joo has an ingenious solution [bit.ly/qMiXt](http://bit.ly/qMiXt)

For more information, visit [igudesmanandjoo.com](http://igudesmanandjoo.com)





# THE SCENE

An Adams world premiere with the Los Angeles Philharmonic; Attila and Nixon in China at the San Francisco Opera; and summer festivals aplenty – at Aspen, St Louis, Bowdoin and Vail Valley



Gustavo Dudamel made a point of embracing John Adams when he was appointed music director of the LA Phil; he conducts the premiere of Adams's latest oratorio in June

## LOS ANGELES

### LA Philharmonic

**Adams: Gospel According to the Other Mary (May 31 – June 3)**

The Los Angeles Philharmonic unveils the world premiere of a John Adams composition commissioned by the orchestra. Adams is an integral part of the LA Phil's creative team and his *Gospel According to the Other Mary* is a 90-minute oratorio for orchestra, chorus and soloists. The libretto, created by Peter Sellars, draws on elements of the New Testament (the stories of Lazarus and Jesus's passion) as well as contemporary Latin American poetry – a method that Adams used to create his first oratorio about the Nativity, *El niño* – including the work of Mexican poet Rosario Castellanos, Dorothy Day, Louise Erdich and June Jordan. Three countertenors serve as the narrator of the story. This first outing for the new oratorio is a concert performance led by the orchestra's music director, Gustavo Dudamel. A staged version, which draws on traditional Mexican funeral rites and is directed by Sellars, is planned for 2013 and will include a subsequent international tour.

[laphil.com](http://laphil.com)

## KANSAS

### Kansas City Symphony

**Brahms: Violin Concerto (June 15-17)**

**Beethoven: Symphony No 9 (June 22-24)**

This season the Kansas City Symphony commissioned a series of new works to celebrate moving into its new home, the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts. In June, the orchestra presents the third of these commissions celebrating Kansas – the City of Fountains – with Stephen Hartke's *Muse of the Missouri*. This ambitious programme, led by the dynamic music director Michael Stern, also includes the Brahms Violin Concerto played by star violinist Joshua Bell. Following this, there's an opportunity to hear Helzberg Hall's new 5548-pipe Casavant Organ in Saint-Saëns's great *Organ* Symphony No 3. The Kansas City Symphony rounds out its season with even more drama, courtesy of Beethoven's jubilant Symphony No 9, allowing the full symphony, chorus and soloists to take advantage of the celebrated acoustics of Helzberg Hall. The programme opens with Hovhaness's Symphony No 2, *Mysterious Mountain*.

[kcsymphony.org](http://kcsymphony.org)

## SEATTLE

### Seattle Symphony

**Korngold: Violin Concerto (June 7, 9 & 10)**

**Rachmaninov: Piano Concerto No 3 (June 14-17)**

**Berlioz: The Damnation of Faust (June 21 & 23)**

Guest conductor Jesús López-Cobos leads the orchestra in concerts with a Spanish flavour. Works include Richard Strauss's *Don Juan*, Turina's *Danzas fantásticas* and Rimsky-Korsakov's *Capriccio espagnol*. But the centerpiece of this programme is Korngold's lush Violin Concerto in D Major, which draws on his Hollywood soundtrack motifs. Greek virtuoso Leonidas Kavakos performs. More virtuosity abounds when British pianist Stephen Hough tackles Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No 3, with the orchestra's new music director, Ludovic Morlot, on the podium. Also on the programme, Bernstein's Overture to *Candide* and Charles Ives's Symphony No 2 (which Bernstein premiered in 1951 with the New York Phil). Morlot also conducts several presentations of Berlioz's epic *The Damnation of Faust*, which promises to be a highlight of his inaugural season. The piece features a chorus, a children's chorus and four soloists.

[seattlesymphony.org](http://seattlesymphony.org)





## SAN FRANCISCO

### San Francisco Opera

**Adams: Nixon in China (June 8 - July 3)**

**Verdi: Attila (June 12 - July 1)**

**Mozart: The Magic Flute (June 13 - July 8)**

San Francisco Opera's Summer Season features three productions never before seen in the city. Firstly, the long-awaited SFO premiere of *Nixon in China* by John Adams, the composer's first opera. Surprising to think it has been 25 years since the opera had its premiere at Houston Grand Opera; in the intervening years it's become part of the American opera canon. A new generation of singers tackles this landmark work, including Brian Mulligan as Richard Nixon. Then, a new presentation of Verdi's early masterpiece, *Attila*, promises some dramatic singing from a distinguished cast, including the legendary bass Ferruccio Furlanetto singing the title-role. This is a co-production with the Teatro alla Scala, where it was first performed last June, led by SFO's music director, Nicola Luisotti, in his La Scala conducting debut - he leads again here. Rounding out this trio of operas, Mozart's *The Magic Flute* is another inventive SFO co-production, created by Japanese-American visual artist Jun Kaneko. The Russian soprano Albina Shagimuratova promises to be a thrilling highlight as the virtuosic Queen of the Night. [sfopera.com](http://sfopera.com)

## SAN FRANCISCO

### San Francisco Symphony

**Rachmaninov: Piano Concerto No 3 (June 14-17)**

**Bartók: Duke Bluebeard's Castle (June 21-23)**

**Beethoven: Symphony No 9 (June 27-30)**

In demand throughout the world's leading concert halls, the ferociously talented pianist Yuja Wang is becoming a familiar face at Davies Symphony Hall, and a seeming favourite of music director Michael Tilson Thomas. In June she joins him and the San Francisco Symphony in performances of Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No 3, in a programme that also features Sibelius's Symphony No 3. The following week, Jeremy Denk performs Liszt's Piano Concerto No 1 - a bravura work for a pianist who is drawn to the heavyweight works in the canon. MTT, who conducts, pairs this with another Hungarian work, Bartók's *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*, a one-act opera presented here semi-staged and featuring mezzo-soprano, Michelle De Young and bass-baritone Alan Held

as the eponymous duke. Then MTT rounds out this centennial season, fittingly perhaps, with Beethoven's Symphony No 9 (June 27-30). [sfsymphony.org](http://sfsymphony.org)

## NEW YORK

### New York Philharmonic

**Carter: Two Controversies and a Conversation (June 8-9)**

**Beethoven; Korngold; Nielsen (June 14-16)**

**Season Finale, All Mozart with Alan Gilbert and Mozart: Piano Concerto No 22 (June 20-23)**

Musicians from the New York Philharmonic continue to generate excitement and electricity with the CONTACT! series - started in 2010 by music director Alan Gilbert to promote contemporary works in more intimate and less formal settings. In June, guest conductor David Robertson arrives to lead an ensemble in the world premiere of a commission from Elliott Carter (whose productivity is astounding for a man who turned 103 in December last year). The piece, *Two Controversies and a Conversation*, is a co-commission with Aldeburgh Festival and Radio France, and will be programmed with the New York premiere of a work by Swiss composer, Michael Jarrell, as well as Pierre Boulez's *...explosante-fixe...* - a piece combining a fluttering flute with a chamber ensemble and electronic sounds. Mid-month, maestro Gilbert conducts the full orchestra in works by Beethoven, Korngold and Nielsen before rounding out the season with an all-Mozart programme that includes Emanuel Ax performing Mozart's Piano Concerto No 22, and the *Great Mass in C Minor*. [nyphil.org](http://nyphil.org)

## ST LOUIS

### The Pulitzer Contemporary Music Festival (June 14, 16 & 17)

This three-day festival - presented by the Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts and musicians of the St Louis Symphony - comprises three concerts of works composed during the past four decades. The festival - 'Retrospectives and Innovations: A Celebration of 10 Years of the Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts' - is programmed by the St Louis Symphony's music director, David Robertson, and features important works by contemporary composers. The first concert features George Crumb's *Black Angels*, a theatrical work for amplified string quartet - a composition possibly inspired



Brian Mulligan (right) as San Francisco Opera's Nixon

by the Vietnam War. The second concert features works by Steve Reich: *Clapping Music* and the recent *Mallet Quartet* from 2009, scored for two marimbas and two vibraphones, to be performed by the edgy So Percussion quartet. A third concert, with maestro Robertson conducting, includes work by Olivier Messiaen (*Visions de l'Amen*) and Unsuk Chin's *Fantaisie mécanique* scored for trumpet, trombone, piano and percussion. This latter work coincides with the American premiere of Chin's opera *Alice in Wonderland* at the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis (June 13-23). [stlsymphony.org/pulitzerfestival2012](http://stlsymphony.org/pulitzerfestival2012)

## CHICAGO

### Chicago Symphony Orchestra

**Beethoven: Triple Concerto (June 7-8)**

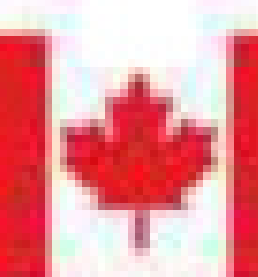
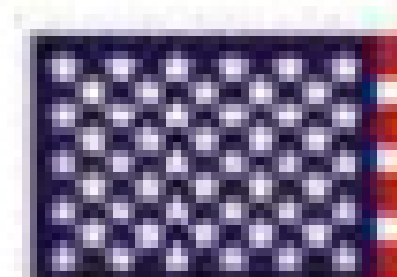
**Mozart: Concerto for Three Pianos (June 9 & 12)**

**Beethoven: Symphony No 5 (June 14, 16, 17 & 19)**

**Bruckner: Symphony No 6 (June 23-24)**

Following his hugely successful 2010 debut with the orchestra, Trevor Pinnock returns to lead a programme centring on Beethoven's Triple Concerto for piano, violin, cello and orchestra, and which features a trio of youthful talents - violinist Stefan Jackiw, cellist Pavel Gomziakov and pianist Kristian Bezuidenhout - rising stars all. A couple of days later Pinnock takes to the keyboard himself, joining Bezuidenhout and Benjamin Hochman for Mozart's Concerto for Three Pianos. Then, mid-month, music director Riccardo Muti is back in charge, with a series of concerts featuring Beethoven's Symphony No 5.





Breaking down barriers: Toronto Symphony music director Peter Oundjian is tempting new audiences with late-night concerts

In the first instance, he precedes the work (intriguingly) with selections from Prokofiev and Shostakovich, and then the CSO also features the symphony in its patented *Beyond the Score* series – entitled here *Fate Knocks?* – offering insight and context to the audience, before the piece is played in all its glory. Towards the end of the month, Muti conducts Bruckner's Symphony No 6, which, at least in terms of its four-movement structure, owes something of a debt to Beethoven.

[cso.org](http://cso.org)

## TORONTO

### Toronto Symphony Orchestra

**Schumann: Piano Concerto (June 6-7)**

**Shostakovich: The Year 1905 (June 9)**

Since taking over as music director of the TSO in 2004, Peter Oundjian has done much to cultivate new audiences and break down the formal image of the classical concert. One such innovation that draws a new audience is a series of late-night concerts, which are sprinkled throughout the season. The TSO invites music lovers to stay up late on June 9 to hear Shostakovich's Symphony No 11 – subtitled *The Year 1905*. The hourlong symphony – a tonal work into which the composer has integrated revolutionary songs, and generally accessible to first-time audiences – starts at 10.30pm on a Saturday night. For those who prefer an earlier start, there are two opportunities during the week to hear the symphony performed at the more usual 8pm. These concerts also feature the Schumann Piano Concerto, with Jonathan Biss as soloist.

[tso.ca](http://tso.ca)

## VAIL

### Bravo! Vail Valley Music Festival

**(June 25 – August 4)**

From the heart of the Colorado Rocky Mountains, the Bravo! Vail Valley Music Festival kicks off its 25th anniversary season, which runs for seven weeks from June 25 to August 4. There's much on offer, including residencies by three world-class orchestras: the New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Dallas Symphony, the last of which has programmed several performances in June. Pianist Anne-Marie McDermott returns for her second season as festival director, and makes several appearances as performer. In late June



she plays Mozart's Piano Concerto No 25 with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. Other celebrated soloists include cellist Alisa Weilerstein and violinist Jennifer Koh who join forces for Brahms's Double Concerto. There's also the opportunity to hear chamber music – presented as Big Music for Little Bands – and a concert featuring all of the aforementioned soloists performing the Mendelssohn Trio and Brahms's Trio No 1.

[vailmusicfestival.org](http://vailmusicfestival.org)

## BRUNSWICK

### Bowdoin International Music Festival

**(June 23 – August 4)**

As summer festival season gets underway, all eyes are on the splashier, celebrity-driven festivals, as brilliant as they are. But every summer since 1964, Brunswick, Maine, has hosted the Bowdoin International Music Festival that brings world-class musicians together with gifted young musicians to present chamber concerts of the highest calibre. The 2012 season offers some thrilling highlights, including two concerts by the violinist Midori who performs all of Bach's unaccompanied sonatas and partitas. The celebrated Shanghai Quartet will return to Bowdoin, as well as other virtuosi drawn from the nation's leading orchestras. But perhaps the real attraction is the opportunity to hear the Artists of Tomorrow – the many superb

young musicians who come here to study and perform at the highest level to make Bowdoin a great American festival.

[bowdoinfestival.org](http://bowdoinfestival.org)

## ASPEN

### Aspen Music Festival

**(June 28 – August 19)**

The Aspen Music Festival and School kicks off its eight-week summer programme in June, now led by its new music director Robert Spano (the music director of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra). This summer's season – which has more than 300 events and involves 800 student and professional musicians – has a theme, Made in America, signalling its celebration of American composers, past and present, as well as European composers who called America home (Rachmaninov, Stravinsky and Hindemith included). With this in mind, the opening night event on June 28 is a tribute to George Gershwin, conducted by maestro Spano and featuring Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, Second Rhapsody and the Piano Concerto in F Major. Three different pianists – Inon Barnatan, Marc-André Hamelin and the precociously talented Aspen alumnus Conrad Tao – perform, accompanied by a big band.

[aspenmusicfestival.com](http://aspenmusicfestival.com)

Previews by Damian Fowler





## Renée Fleming

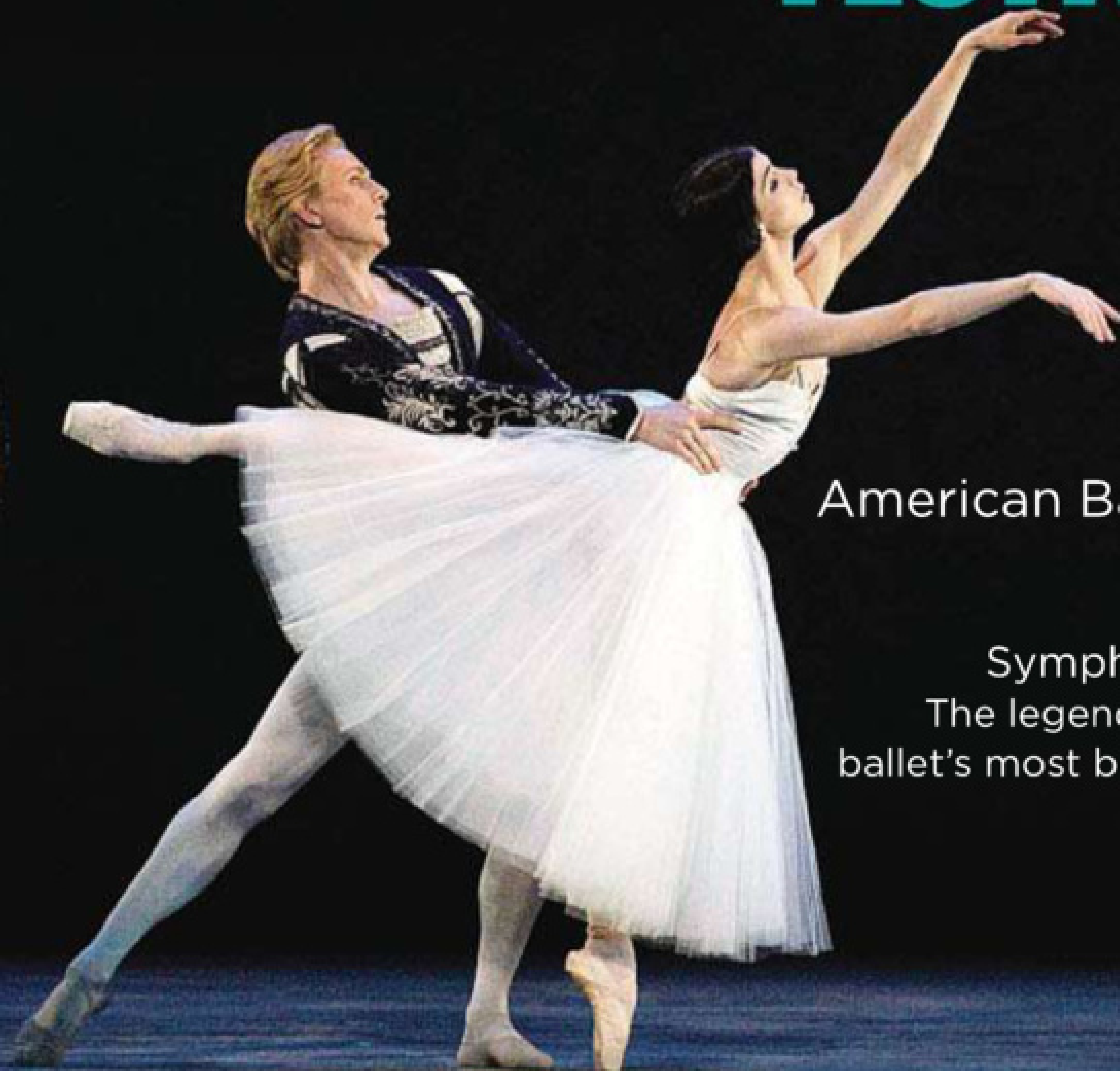
In Recital

"The people's diva...a voice as warm and rich as a fine single malt" *London Times*.

**April 16**

# VIRGINIA ARTS FESTIVAL

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Virginia Symphony Orchestra & Chorus  
**May 26 & 27**



JoAnn  
Falletta,  
conductor

Virginia International Tattoo  
"A spectacle of music and might..."  
— CBS Sunday Morning

**April 27-29**



Tianwa Yang, violin  
**May 21 & 24**



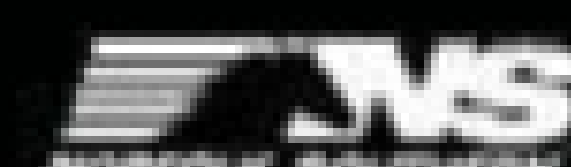
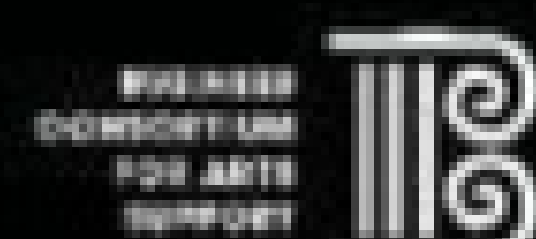
André-Michel Schub, piano  
Ani Kavafian, violin  
Peter Wiley, cello  
**May 10**



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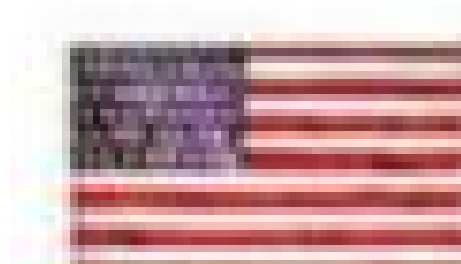
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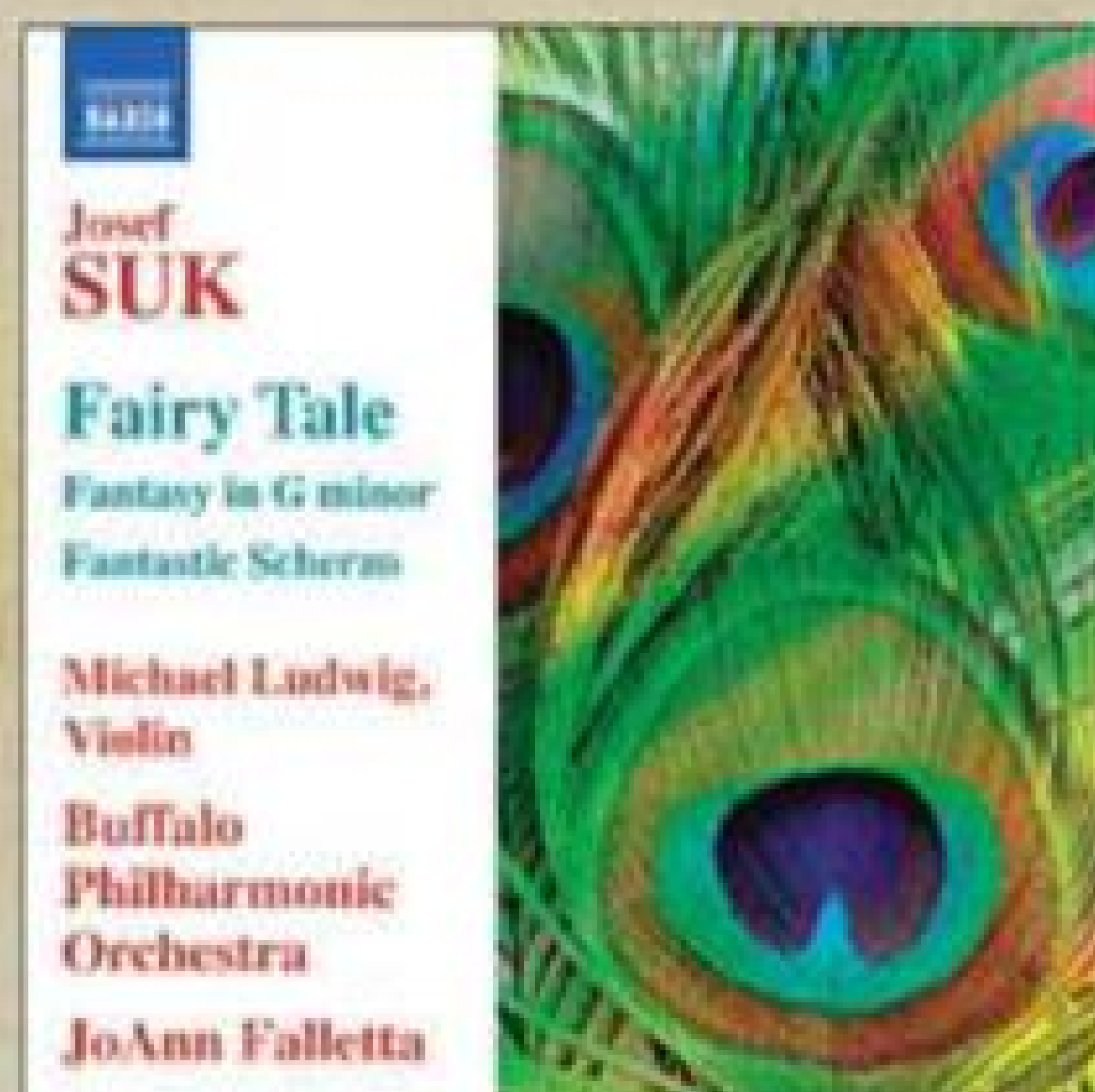
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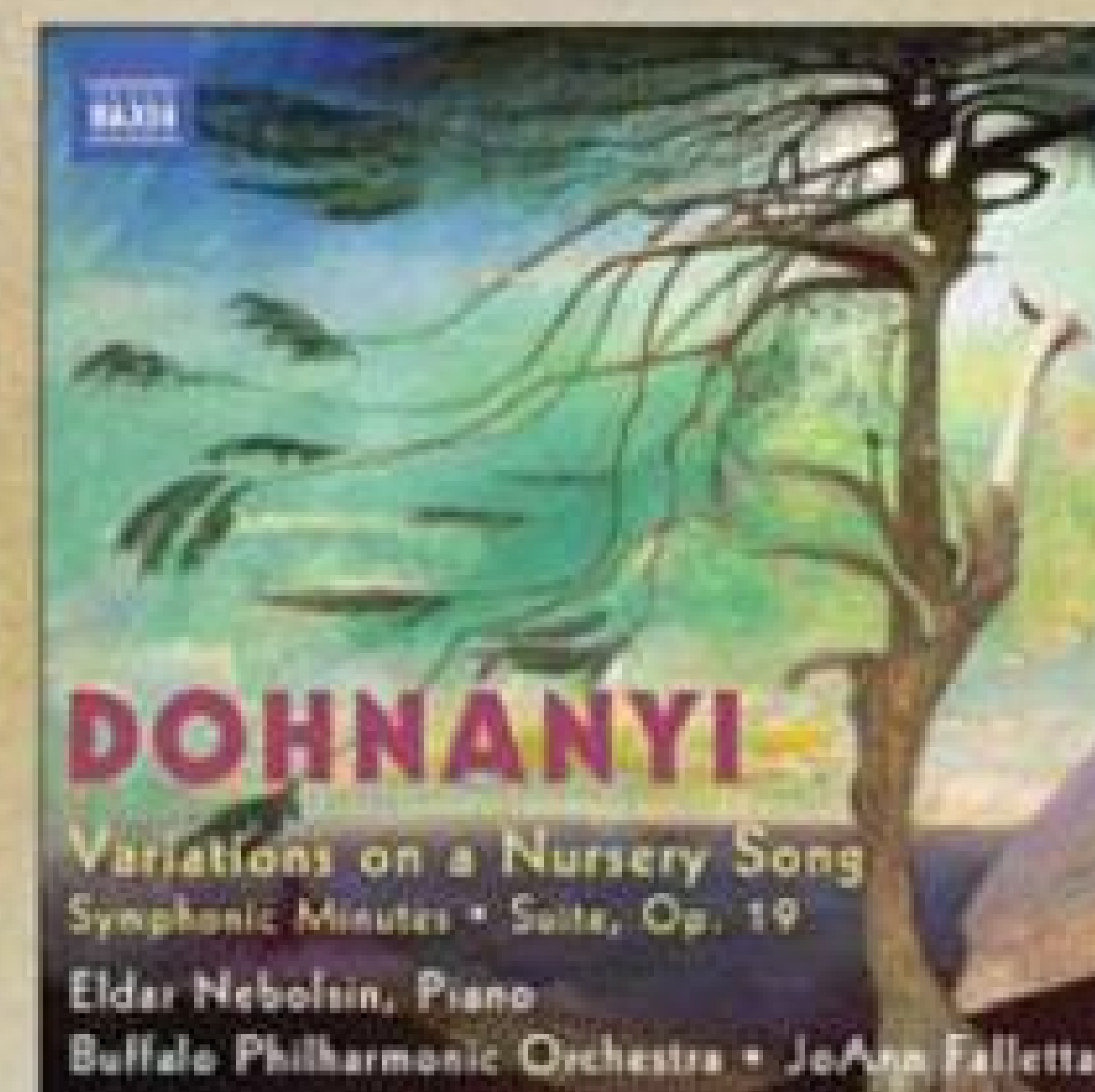
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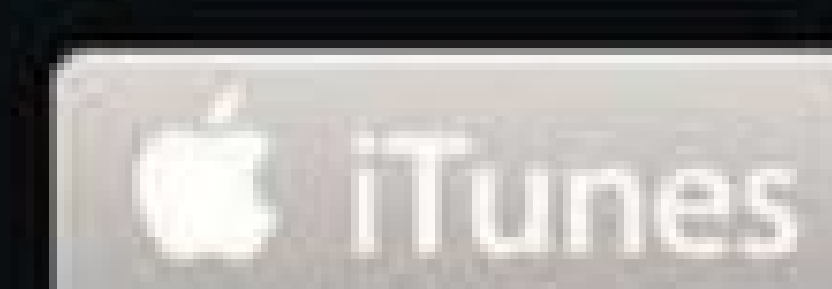


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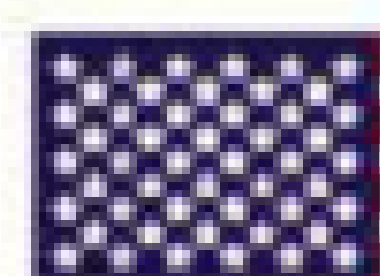
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# Reviews



## Donald Rosenberg reviews Baroque trios from Chicago:

*'The musicians ornament with sensitivity, savour the expressive sophistication and achieve utmost clarity'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE XI**

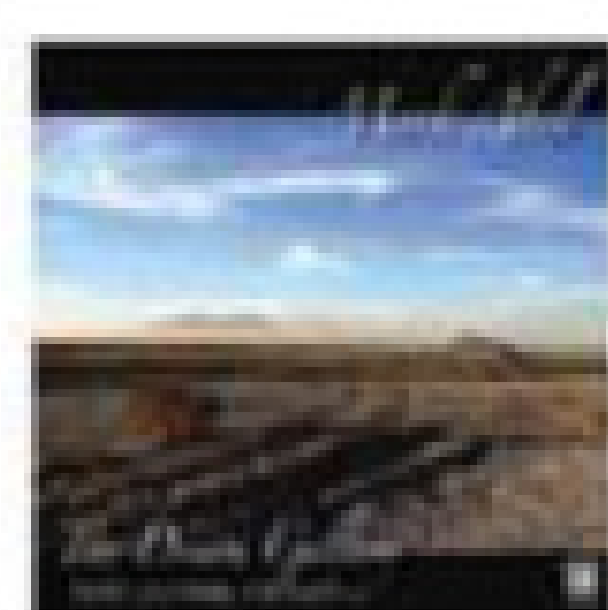


## Laurence Vittes reviews Drew Minter's troubadour project:

*'Minter's extraordinary self-accompanied performances reveal just how potent and vital the art form was'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE XIII**

## M Abel

The Dream Gallery: Seven California Portraits  
Mary Jaeb *sop* Delaney Gibson, Janelle DeStefano  
*mezs* Martha Jane Weaver *contr* Tom Zohar *ten*  
David Marshman *bar* Carver Cossey *bass*  
La Brea Sinfonietta / Sharon Lavery  
Delos © DE3418 (69' • DDD • T)



### Mark Abel with pictures of the Orange County in song

At first, Mark Abel's song-cycle of first-person accounts of Californians and California life seems to have harnessed all the right elements from American popular song forms. Vernacular text is set musically with a certain lyrical verve, performed by singers with a full palette of vocal colour at their disposal, who never let a soaring melody get in the way of their enunciation. And, for a while, this collection sounds like Abel is really on to something. None of his West Coast personae would fit comfortably in a true pop-song format, and the composer nearly succeeds in rendering them in art-song on purely American terms.

Unfortunately, though, *The Dream Gallery* wears out its welcome long before the recording is over. Much of the problem lies in the instrumentation, which borrows far too many bad habits from journeyman Broadway orchestrators in puffing up the surface at the expense of the core.

Part of that surely reflects Abel's work as a studio engineer – when one learns a craft, one tends to use it to the full – but the end result is like an intimate cabaret set that loses its charm on a big-budget stage. Melodies here never quite sustain the expectation, lyrics never seem quite as profound as they want to be, and these musical portraits, essentially charming in their modesty, become frequently overwhelmed by their frame. Halfway through this collection, you start wishing that Abel had trusted his basic material a little more. **Ken Smith**

## Hanson

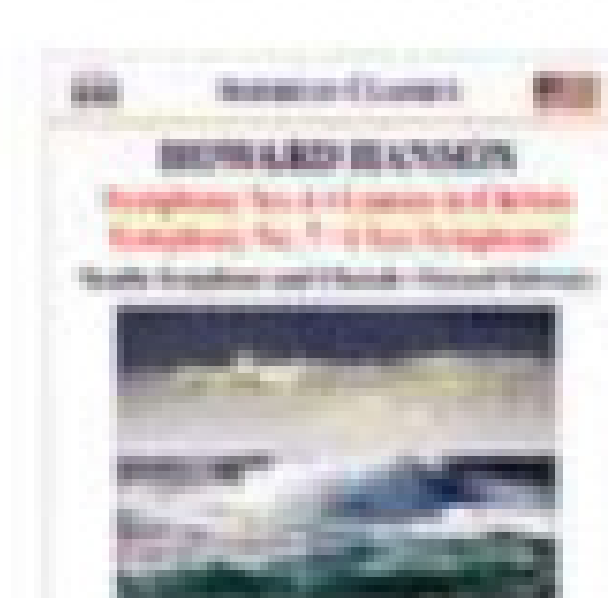
Symphonies – No 6<sup>a</sup>; No 7, 'A Sea Symphony'<sup>b</sup>.  
Lumen in Christo<sup>c</sup>



Sharon Lavery and La Brea Sinfonietta recording Mark Abel's Dream Gallery

### bc Seattle Chorale; Seattle Symphony Orchestra / Gerard Schwarz

Naxos American Classics © 8 559704 (60' • DDD)  
From Delos <sup>a</sup>DE3092 (2/91), <sup>b</sup>DE3130 (3/93),  
<sup>c</sup>DE3160 (5/95)



### Naxos's Hanson reissue project with the Sixth and the Seventh

As the Seattle Symphony moves firmly into the Ludovic Morlot era, the days two decades ago when Gerard Schwarz, Delos and Howard Hanson legitimised digital technology seem far away. Having listened to a lot of Hanson in a relatively short time (this review makes four, and with no regrets), I have come to look forward as much to what a modern symphony orchestra and audiophile recording team can do as to worrying about whether the music is fashionable or 'great'.

Hanson wrote the music on this CD when he was 72, 78 and 81 years of age, and about each he must have felt deeply. The Sixth Symphony was commissioned by the

New York Philharmonic to celebrate its 185th season. *Lumen in Christo* was commissioned by Nazareth College to celebrate its 50th anniversary. The Seventh Symphony, his last, commemorates the 50th anniversary of the National Music Camp at Interlochen, Michigan.

In each there is a comfort zone with sharing his privacy, both in the pleasure he takes in his own facility and skill, and in how he uses it to express his faith. They are full of musical cues that the listener is intended to hear, from places like Haydn's *Creation* and Handel's *Messiah*, and even the famous passages from Hanson's own Fourth Symphony. There are bold strokes, ominous moods, martial attitudes, gentle epiphanies and hopeful, joyful resolutions.

Adding immeasurably to the musical experience are essays by Steven C Smith and Jim Svejda which alternate stylistically like characters in a Stoppard play; they both persuasively tell the stories behind the music. You might also just want to curl up with Hanson, setting the volume at just below mid-



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level so that John Eargle's sound can be allowed to glow. A good starting point is the exquisite second section of *Lumen in Christo*, which shows a staggering virtuosity in handling allusional musical textures and themes.

Despite its own change of direction, the Seattle Symphony has not forgotten its loyal supporters. It has entered into an agreement with the online Naxos Music Library to provide Symphony subscribers streaming access to Naxos's Seattle Symphony reissues.

Laurence Vittes

## Pritsker

William James's Varieties of Religious Experience

Chester Layman *spkr* ..... William James

Marc Molomot *ten* ..... Experience #1

Lynn Norris *sop* ..... Experience #2

Chanda Rule *mez* ..... Experience #3, Gospel Voice

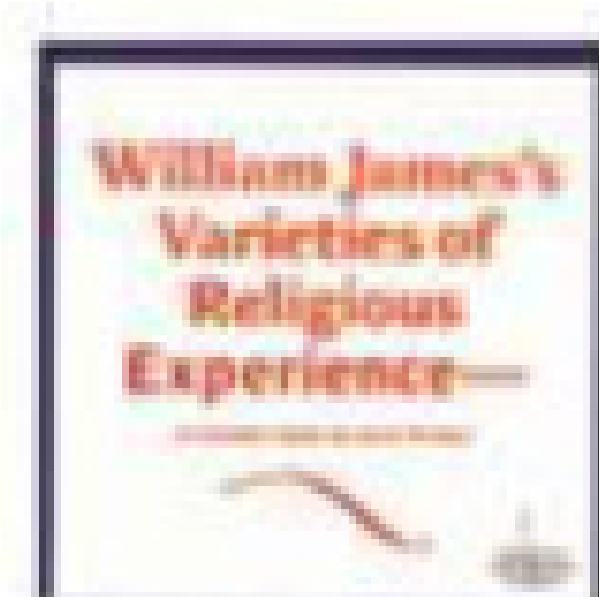
Charles Coleman *bar* ..... Experience #4, Leo Tolstoy

Kim Pritsker *spkr* ..... Announcer

Gene Pritsker, Greg Baker *egtrs*

Dann Barrett *vc* Larry Goldman *db*

Composers Concordance Records © COMCON007  
(43' • DDD)



William James opera from the  
Sound Liberation founder

Philosopher William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience* may not seem a natural choice for musical theatre treatment. Tell that to Gene Pritsker, a protean and prolific composer who has written a 42-minute chamber opera based on the book. It is scored for two electric guitars, cello and bass, accompanying a cast of four solo singers plus two speakers: the role of William James played by a male narrator, and a female announcer. Although the musical textures are often jaggedly melodic and restless (Frank Zappa's pop-influenced classical composing comes to mind), they essentially provide an active yet never over-busy backdrop for the text that predominates.

The piece gains dynamic momentum and variety as it unfolds. I especially like soprano Lynn Norris's solo turn in 'The less real of the two', which is supported by ethereal *tremolos* in different registers, and a clever gospel piece, 'Closer to me than my own breath', where mezzo-soprano Chanda Rule's breathy phrasing couldn't be more stylistically apt. The longest section features baritone Charles Coleman (who happens to be an excellent composer in his own right) as Leo Tolstoy. His rich timbre and clear pronunciation certainly help to enliven the eloquent words. In fact, the cast's generally excellent diction is a big asset, considering that no texts are included. The dry, unresonant close-up engineering creates an intimate listening experience that I assume was



Bench Baroque: John Mark Rozendaal, Rachel Barton Pine and David Schrader of Trio Settecento

intentional on the composer's part.  
Recommended. **Jed Distler**

## 'A French Soirée'

Lully Ballet royal de flore - Divertissement

F Couperin Allemande. Sarabande. Sicilienne.

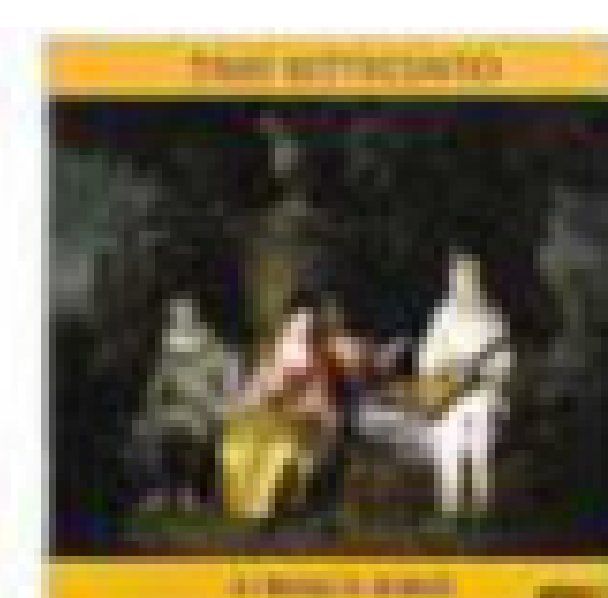
Gavotte. Troisième concert Marais La guitare.

Prelude. Chaconne Rebel Sonate huitième

Rameau Quatrième concert Leclair Sonata in G

Trio Settecento

Cedille © CDR90000 129 (79' • DDD)



Pine's ensemble move  
to the French Baroque

Musicians who excel in works of the Romantic era and beyond aren't always as adept (or at all skilled) in music of previous times. Rachel Barton Pine is one artist who shifts persuasively from modern to Baroque violin, as when she performs with her superlative Chicago-based early music ensemble Trio Settecento.

Pine and colleagues John Mark Rozendaal (viola da gamba) and David Schrader (harpsichord) are in top form on 'A French Soirée', the group's newest disc and a follow-up to their recorded voyages to Italy and Germany. As played by these musicians, the composers – Couperin, Leclair, Lully, Marais, Rameau, Rebel – are confirmed as titans of the period, even on the most intimate scale.

The first half of the programme is a divertissement of short selections by Couperin, Lully and Marais that were enjoyed by Louis XIV. Among them is a character piece, Marais's *La guitare*, for the composer's favoured instrument, the bass viol, and played

here with robust flair by Rozendaal. Trio Settecento apply bountiful charm to delicate moments, as in the 'Muzette' from Couperin's *Troisième concert*, and digs into the scintillating writing in Rameau's *Quatrième concert* with earthy delight.

Whatever the demands, the musicians ornament with stylish sensitivity, savour the expressive sophistication and achieve utmost clarity of texture. Pine and Rozendaal use vibrato sparingly, while finding a spectrum of shadings to colour phrases. With Schrader contributing his own brand of articulate and glistening artistry, the trio turns this delectably considered soirée into an evening to cherish.

Donald Rosenberg

## 'Muses Nine'

'Eight American Composers Plus One Pianist'

M Bauer Six Preludes, Op 15 Beach Dreaming, Op 15

No 3. Honeysuckle, Op 97 No 5. Scottish Legend,

Op 54 No 1. From Blackbird Hills, Op 83 M Bonds

Troubled Water Diemer Toccata M Joyce Medium

Piano L Larsen Mephisto Rag Thome Spiral

Journey Zwillich Lament

Becky Billock *pf*

Muses Nine © (63' • DDD)



Billock profiles eight US  
composers at the keyboard

It's too bad that this release is sometimes hampered by constricted sound and a tinny piano that is not ideally tuned, for Becky Billock is obviously a solid and committed pianist who does ample justice to her recital of 20th- and 21st-century works by American





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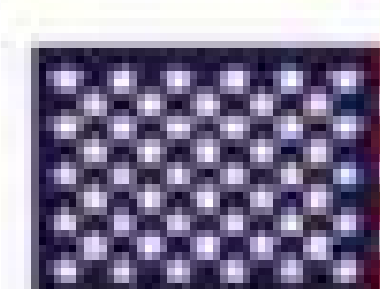
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women composers. She opens with Diane Thome's *Spiral Journey*, a rather rhapsodic piece that owes more than a little to Aaron Copland and John Adams. Unfortunately, the piano's funky timbral make-up gets in the way of Molly Joyce's sustained mood-painting in *Medium Piano*, a work that might be described as Berg and Debussy's secret love-child.

Emma Lou Diemer's fireball of a toccata features percussive muted-string effects that are truly integral to the music's plot-line. The concision, idiomatic layout and expressive reserve distinguishing Marion Bauer's inspired Six Preludes ought to spearhead a fully fledged revival of her chamber, orchestral, choral and other piano works. Ellen Taaffe Zwilich's *Lament* (written in memory of Carnegie Hall's late executive and artistic director Judith Arron) is a masterpiece of brooding, lyrical intensity. Billock's shapely performances of four Amy Beach pieces do this marvellous composer's impassioned and harmonically rich idiom justice; in fact, I prefer her animated sculpting of *Dreaming's* melodic lines and dynamic contrasts to Alan Feinberg's introspective, slower, more disembodied Argo traversal.

Libby Larsen's inventive *Mephisto Rag* is a kind of ragtime fantasy that seems to be working its way into the contemporary keyboard repertoire. Billock plays it well but I've heard edgier, more incisive live performances. However, the booming bass-lines and gospel-tinged syncopations of Margaret Bonds's *Troubled Water* ring out with joyful flair in Billock's hands. Notwithstanding sonic caveats, this is a well-curated and worthwhile programme. **Jed Distler**

## 'Seven Steps'

**Beethoven** String Quartet No 14, Op 131

**Brooklyn Rider** Seven Steps **Tignor** *Together into this Unknowable Night*<sup>a</sup>

**Brooklyn Rider** with <sup>a</sup>**Christopher Tignor** *perc/elects*

In a Circle © ICRO05 (63' • DDD)



**Brooklyn Rider with Beethoven and their own four-way creation**

Brooklyn Rider is a string quartet on a mission. The New York ensemble explores the newest ideas in the genre while also acknowledging history. Even the group's name has a significant meaning, referring to Der Blaue Reiter ('The Blue Rider'), an artistic collective in pre-First World War Munich that included audacious figures from many artistic disciplines.

On its newest recording, 'Seven Steps', the intrepid Brooklyn musicians show their versatility in music of myriad sonic stripes. Their own collective composition, which gives the disc its name, comprises seven sections abounding in colourful material and varied



Brooklyn Rider mid-performance at the Angel Orensanz Institute, Manhattan

styles. Hints of jazz are woven into a fabric of explosive and tranquil appeal.

The group delves into more layered sonorities in Christopher Tignor's *Together into this Unknowable Night*, a tone-poem that adds drums and electronics (including an AM radio) to the narrative mix. The interactions are mesmerising, with all sorts of sustained gestures shaded by deft punctuations and subtle effects.

These 21st-century creations lead to one of the foundations of 19th-century repertoire, Beethoven's String Quartet in C sharp minor, Op 131. The performance eschews any suggestion of Romantic excess, instead making its points through artistry of lean and vibrant persuasion. It would have been even more involving without certain distractions, especially the first violin's tendency to slide slowly between notes at too many points. Such mannerisms aside, Brooklyn Rider bring to the score the same spirit of freshness and adventure that audiences of Beethoven's time must have experienced. **Donald Rosenberg**

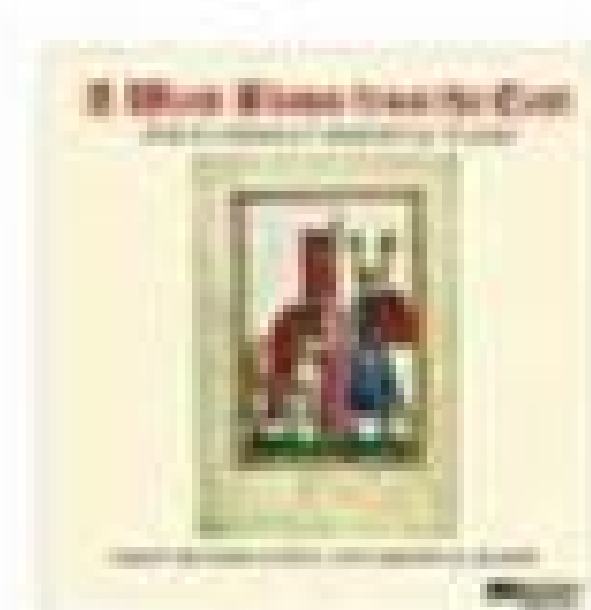
## 'A Wind Blows from the East'

**'Four German Medieval Tales'**

**Wolfram von Eschenbach** *Titirel* Fragments - excs **Neidhart von Reuenthal** Lied, 'Blozen wir den anger ligen sahen' **Sachs** *Gesangweise* to the Tune of 'Our Lady' **Wolkenstein** Tagelied, 'Es seusst dorthor von Orient'

**Drew Minter** *counterten/bar/hps*

Bridge © BRIDGE9372 (64' • DDD • T/t)



**Washington countertenor in medieval attire**

Although Drew Minter on this seductively imaginative CD excels in every facet of the

singer and harpist's art, it is the enormous personalities of the four featured medieval singers, their music and their tales that predominate. They lived for love and danger – and art, of course. Their work inflamed passions among the wealthy and powerful.

Neidhart von Reuenthal, who claimed noble blood, and Oswald von Wolkenstein, who had the blood himself but was a litigious royal pain, construct narratives from arresting silken melodies about the pleasures and realities of true love. Hans Sachs sets down in solid pre-Wagnerian measures a gripping medieval murder tale. Wolfram von Eschenbach, alone among the four, aims for and accomplishes something higher. The 25 minutes of excerpts from his *Titirel* fragments, concerning two lovers caught in the crosshairs of seekers of the Holy Grail, has an almost tangible emotional texture.

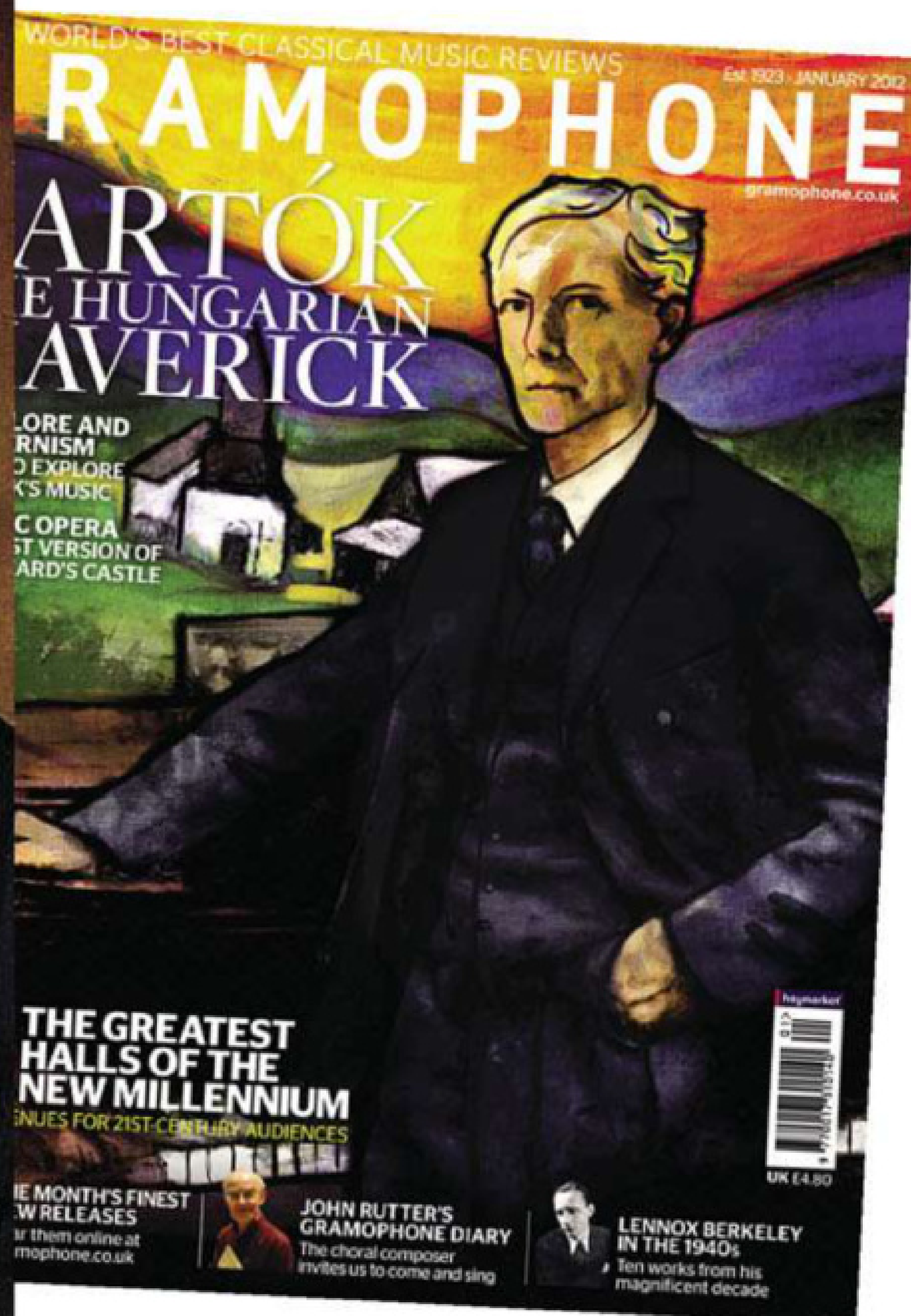
We know from history books that the troubadour's art was highly prized and sophisticated. It is another thing to hear it performed so convincingly. In bringing back these men and their times, Minter's extraordinary self-accompanied performances, as either countertenor or baritone, reveal just how potent and vital the art form itself was and can still be to modern listeners, and how effective the use of the harp was, both as accompaniment and in an occasional telling riff.

The clear sound, recorded at Christ the King Episcopal Church in Stone Ridge, has just the right touch of ambience. Minter's excellent booklet-notes are just the right length and complexity for such abstruse material and the poems receive excellent, readable translations.

**Laurence Vittes**



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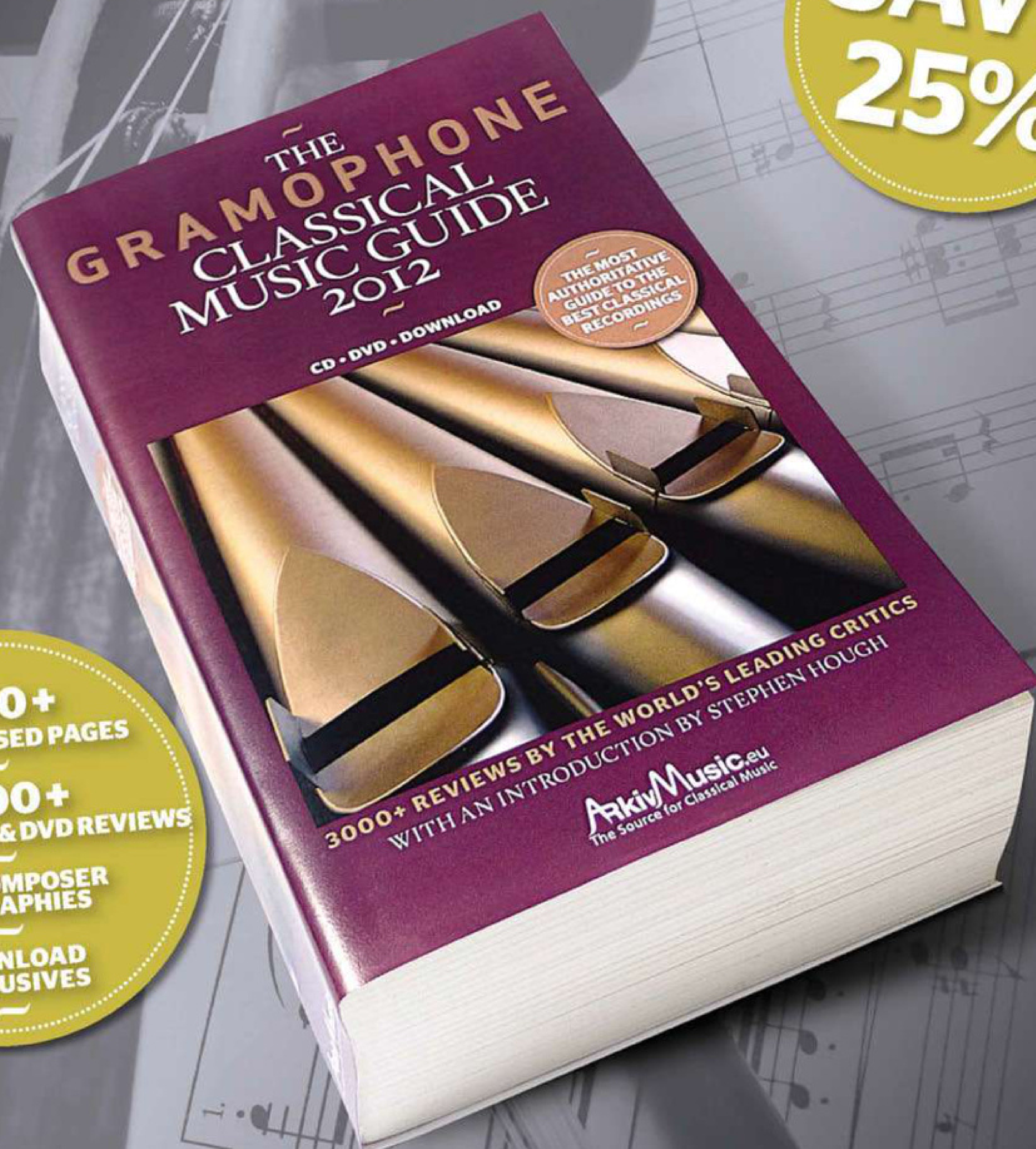
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## THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



**ANDREW MELLOR** describes the music of Rued Langgaard, the subject of this month's Icons, as 'the biggest surprise-discovery of my musical life'. Thanks to a Danish Arts Council grant earlier this year, *Gramophone's* reviews editor spent a week in Denmark 'digging further into the life of a man who can safely be described as a musical phenomenon'.



**RICHARD FAIRMAN** has experienced a volte-face in his view of Britten's *Songs and Proverbs of William Blake*: 'From finding it the most difficult of his song-cycles, I now believe that it is the most rewarding.' It was, he says, 'a real pleasure' to meet Roderick Williams, the latest to record the work, for *The Musician and the Score*.



Writing about the development of the classical guitar for our Guitar Focus this issue provided **WILLIAM YEOMAN** with 'a rare opportunity to interview both a guitarist and his guitar maker, and to appreciate the high level of collaboration involved'. He also enjoyed the challenge 'of trying to communicate the richness of the guitar's history'.



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# GRAMOPHONE

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## Miloš: new champion of the classical guitar



The guitar holds an intriguing place within classical music. For many, it's an instrument capable of great tonal beauty and high drama, with a repertoire steeped in both soulful pathos and graceful elegance. But it's the very repertoire that, while a guitarist's greatest gift, has also led to the instrument being marginalised by the mainstream. In many cases, certainly until recently, great guitar composers didn't tend to write for other instruments

– and the great composers of the rest of the repertoire didn't tend to write for guitar. It took Andrés Segovia to change this, almost single-handedly creating the role of solo virtuoso guitarist in the recording age. Guitarists of subsequent generations – Julian Bream, John Williams and David Russell, to name just three – built upon this. And then recently something extraordinary happened: a classical guitarist's debut recording remained at the top of the Specialist Classical Chart for much of the past year. That artist is Miloš Karadaglić – or Miloš as he's known simply – who was named *Gramophone's* Young Artist of the Year at our 2011 Awards. I met him to talk about how he sees the guitar within the wider musical world.

**'For many, it's an instrument capable of great tonal beauty and high drama, with a repertoire steeped in both soulful pathos and graceful elegance'**

So rarely does a guitarist make the cover of *Gramophone* that we've also taken the opportunity to explore the topic more widely, looking at how the repertoire grew – and continues to grow – under its leading advocates. We also talk to a leading practitioner of period performance, William Carter.

Being dismissive of barriers within music is not unique to Miloš. Staff writer Charlotte Smith talks to star soloists who have made the bold decision to set down their instruments (temporarily) and pick up the conductor's baton. Vladimir Ashkenazy, Han-Na Chang, Nikolaj Znaider and Paul Watkins, among others, tell us what one discipline adds to the other.

And finally, don't forget to log on to [gramophone.co.uk](http://gramophone.co.uk) to explore the wealth of archive articles we've gathered to celebrate the artists in our Hall of Fame, launched in the last issue – and thank you, too, for all the comments we've had about those who made, and didn't make, the final list.



Martin Cullingford

[martin.cullingford@haymarket.com](mailto:martin.cullingford@haymarket.com)



# GRAMOPHONE *Choice*

**G** Informed by our unrivalled panel of critics, we choose the month's must-hear recordings



## Recording of the Month

*'In his hands, the music is like a living thing; one senses that each performance will have its own individual character'*

► FOR THE REVIEW BY DUNCAN DRUCE, TURN TO PAGE 38

### TCHAIKOVSKY. MENDELSSOHN

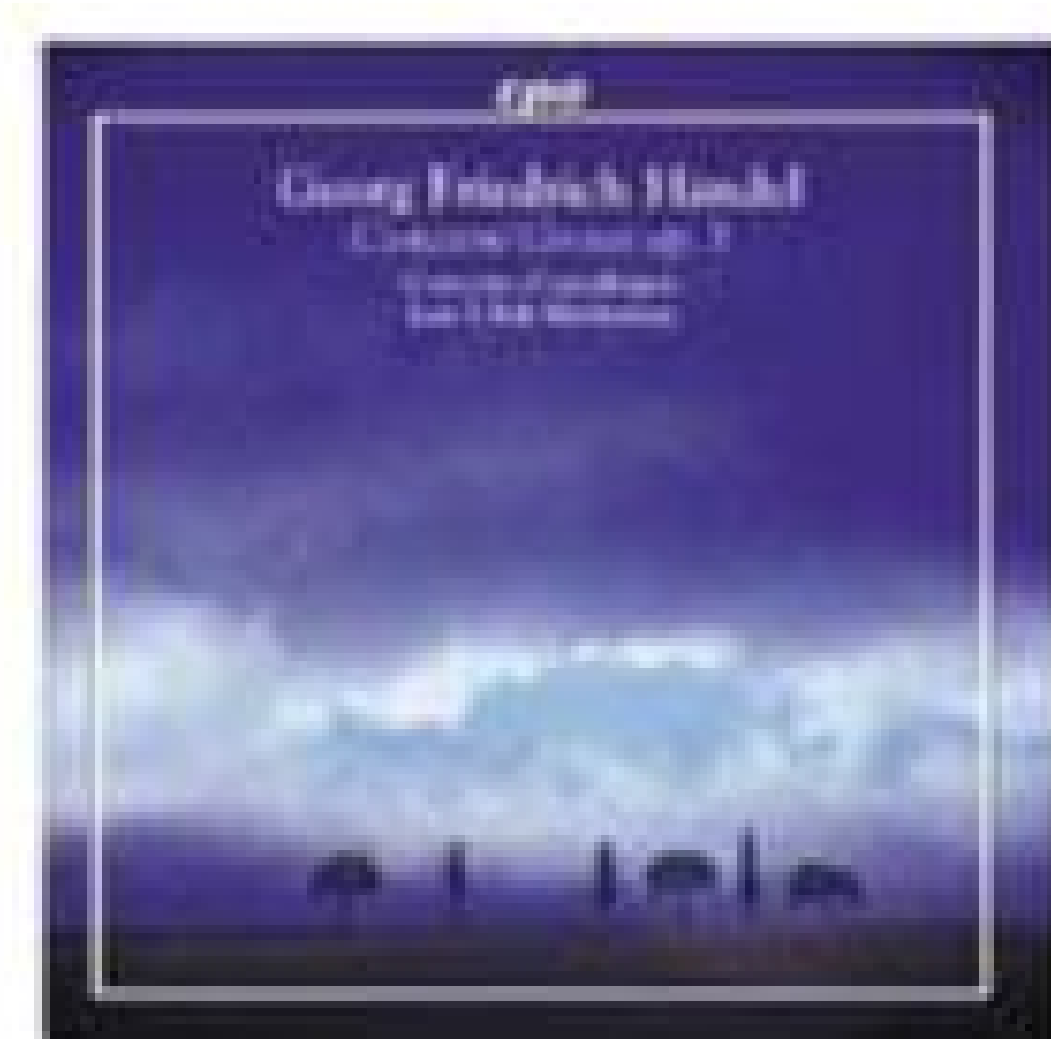
Violin Concertos

Ray Chen *vn* Swedish Radio SO / Daniel Harding

Sony 88697 98410-2



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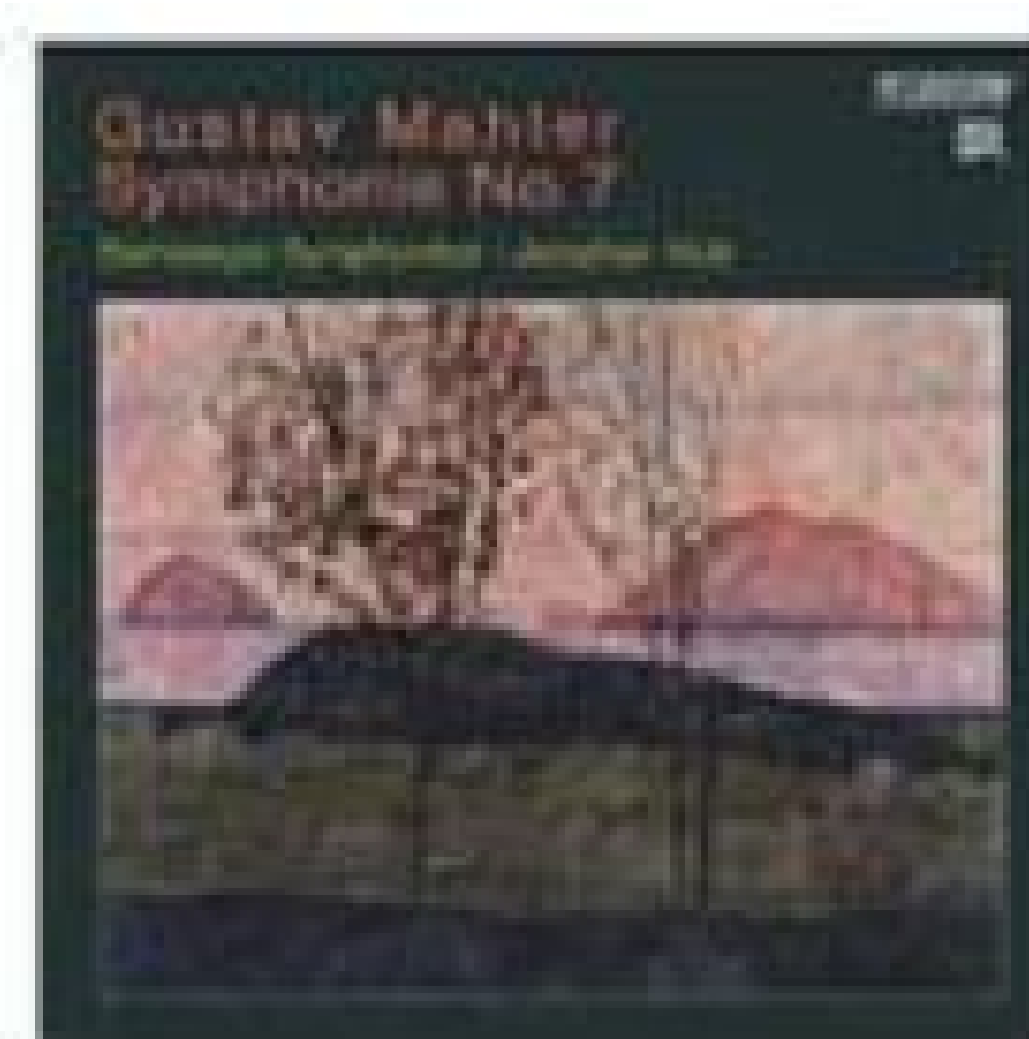
### HANDEL

Six Concerti grossi, Op 3, HWV312-17

Concerto Copenhagen / Lars Ulrik Mortensen  
CPO CPO777 488-2

'The performances ooze abundantly with charm, wisdom and warmth...One of the most endearing artistic interpretations of Op 3 in recent years.'

► REVIEW ON PAGE 43



### MAHLER

Symphony No 7

Bamberg Symphony Orchestra / Jonathan Nott  
Tudor TUDOR7176

'The Mahler we know and love resides in the central section, where the harp *glissandos* to tranquil heights in music that the Bambergers play and feel most affectingly.'

► REVIEW ON PAGE 46



### LANGGAARD

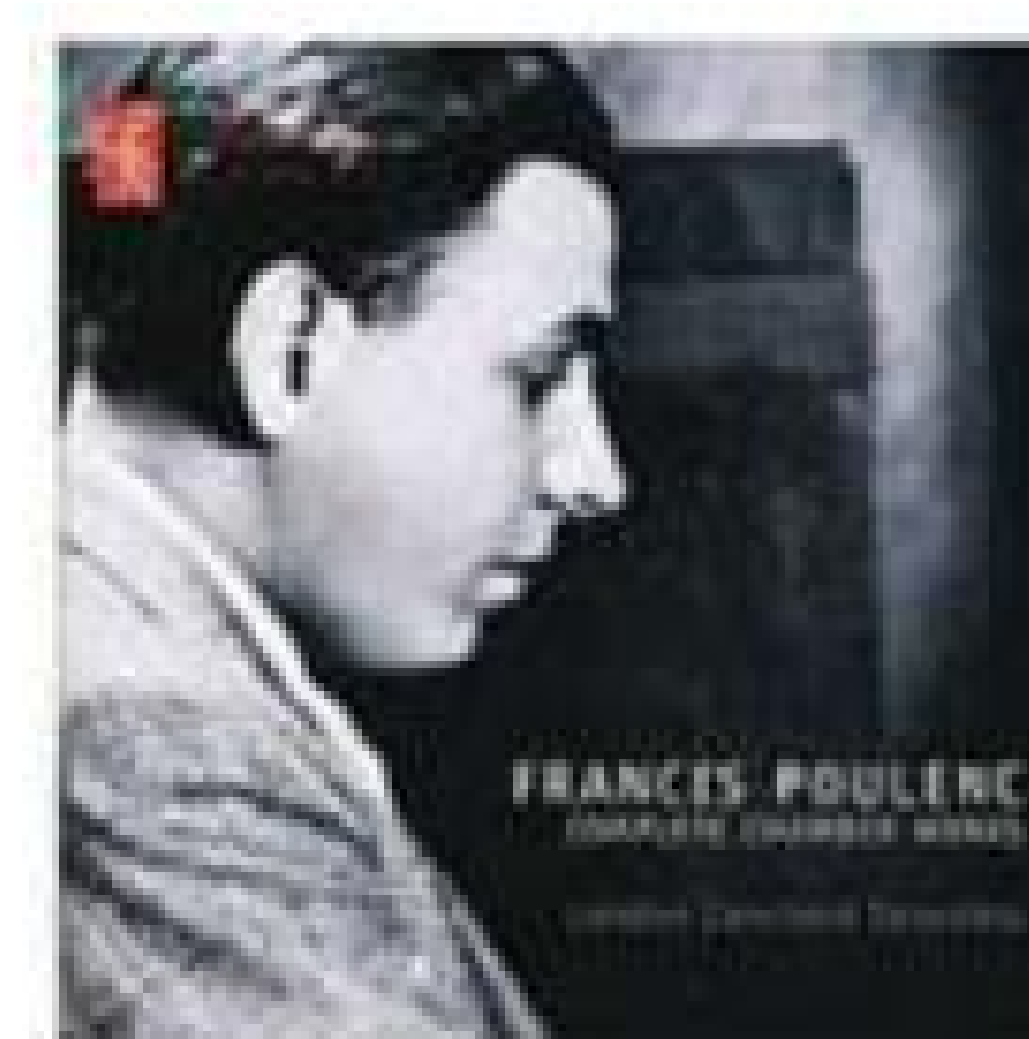
'String Quartets, Vol 1'

String Quartets - No 2; No 3; No 6

Nightingale Quartet  
Dacapo 6 220575

'This young Danish ensemble throws itself into the music with a vehemence and sense of purpose that go far beyond the pioneering venture of the Kontras.'

► REVIEW ON PAGE 59



### POULENC

Complete Chamber Works  
London Conchord

Ensemble  
Champs Hill Records  
CHRC028

'A factor that comes across clearly here is that Poulenc had a more or less infallible ear for tapping into the timbre and personality of different instruments.'

► REVIEW ON PAGE 61



### SCRIABIN

Twelve Etudes, Op 8.

Six Preludes, Op 13.

Five Preludes, Op 16.

Piano Sonata No 10, Op 70.

Vers la flamme, Op 72

Olli Mustonen *pf*  
Ondine ODE1184-2

'Scriabin as you have never heard him before, played by one of music's most formidable and compulsive free spirits.'

► REVIEW ON PAGE 71



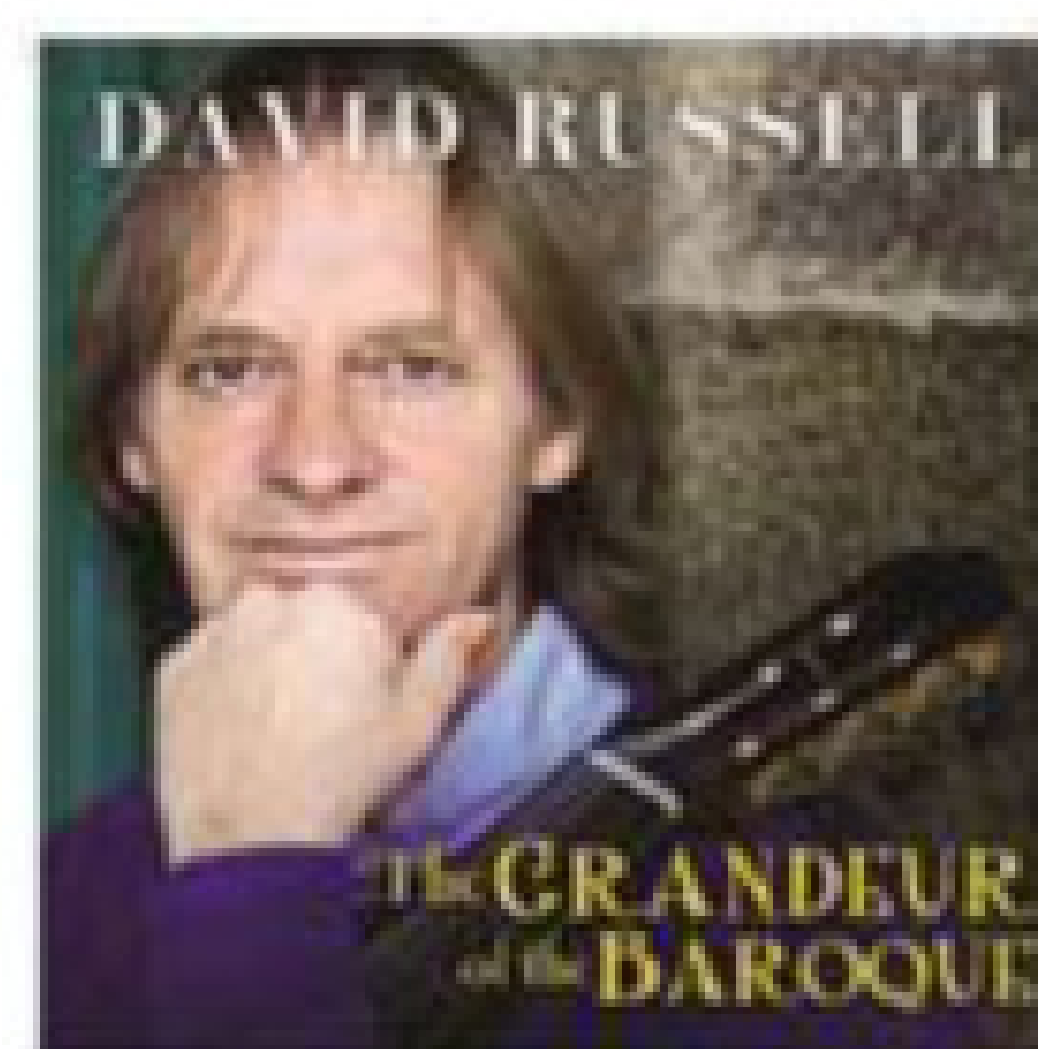
**'FANTASIA'**

Piano Works

**Yuja Wang** *pf*

DG 479 0052GH

'Hear her in Rachmaninov's A minor "Red Riding Hood" Etude, Op 39 No 6, where, opening with a ferocious growl, she sets the stage for playing of extreme virtuosity.'

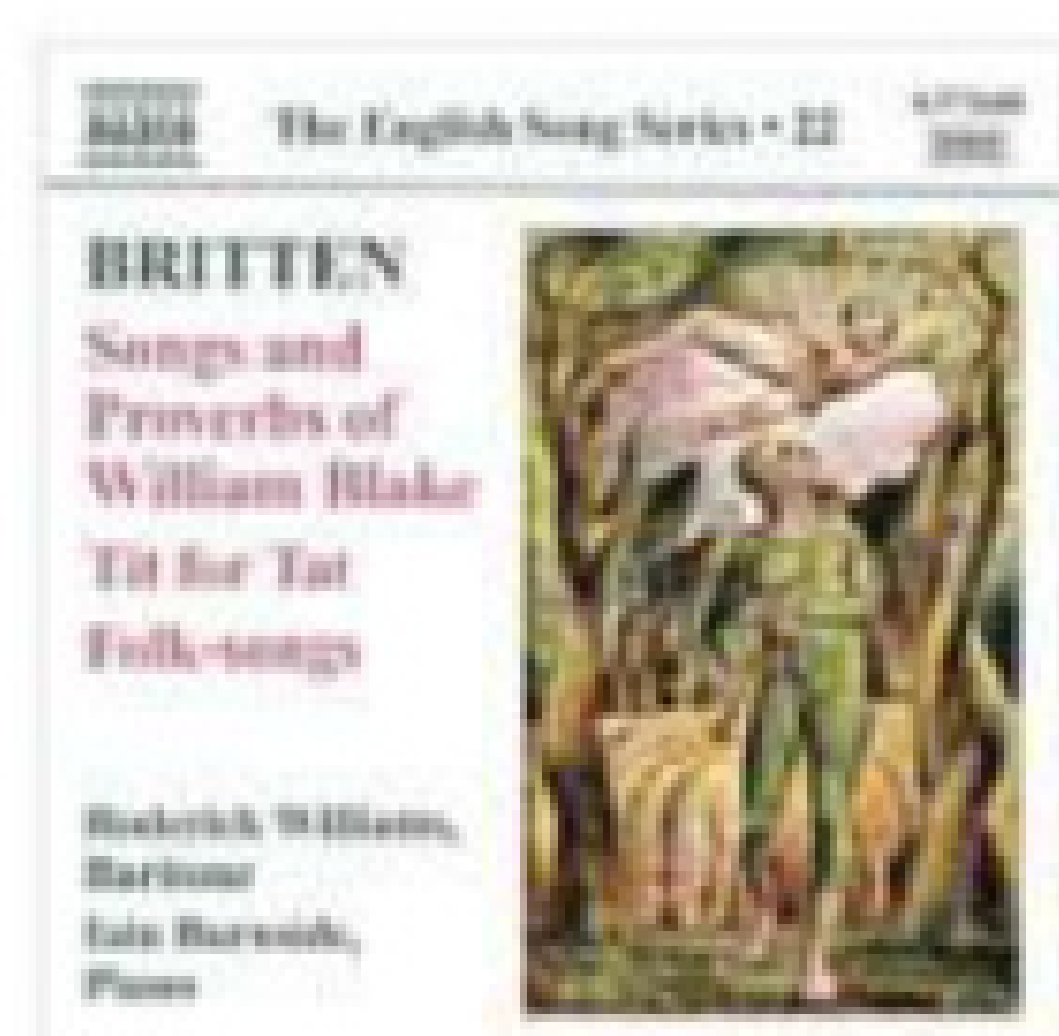
► [REVIEW ON PAGE 73](#)**'GRANDEUR OF THE BAROQUE'**

Guitar Works

**David Russell** *gtr*

Telarc TEL33223-02

'In the Toccata from Bach's Partita, BWV830, the outer sections are boldly realised and ringing with campanelas, the fugue more reflective and dynamically complex'

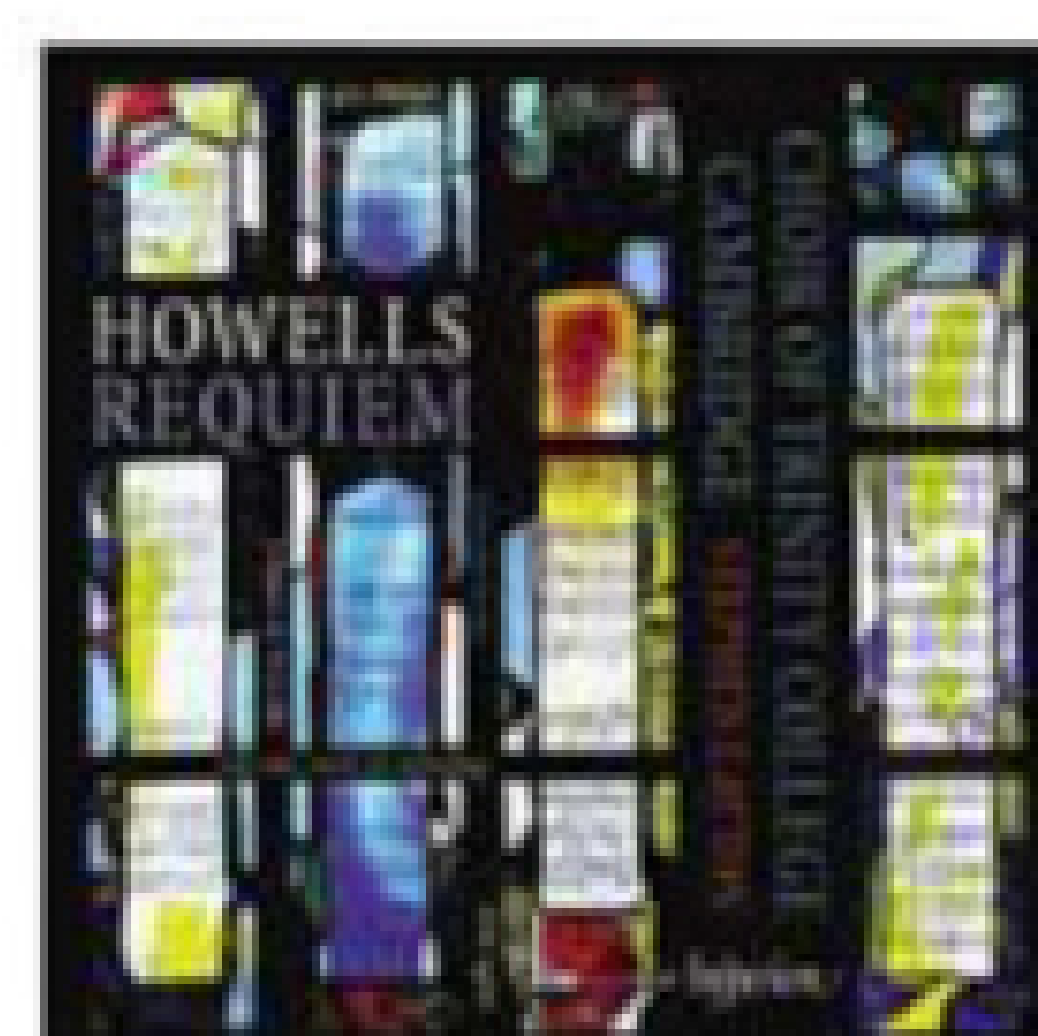
► [REVIEW ON PAGE 73](#)**BRITTEN**

Songs and Proverbs of William Blake, etc

**Roderick Williams** *bar***Iain Burnside** *pf*

Naxos 8 572600

'Putting this new recording immediately up against the composer and Fischer-Dieskau is like going from hymns ancient to hymns modern.'

► [REVIEW ON PAGE 74](#)**HOWELLS**

Choral Works

**Choir of Trinity College,****Cambridge / Stephen****Layton** with **Simon Bland,****Jeremy Cole** *org*

Hyperion CDA67914

'The grand hymns and canticles are extrovert and focused, the intimate supplications such as *Take him, earth* sung with great poise.'

► [REVIEW ON PAGE 77](#)**DVD****VIVALDI**

Orlando furioso

**Soloists; Chorus****of the Théâtre des****Champs-Élysées, Paris;****Ensemble Matheus /****Jean-Christophe Spinosi**

Naïve DR2148

'It's a *tour de force*: I didn't enjoy it much, but then I don't "enjoy" *King Lear* either.'

► [REVIEW ON PAGE 87](#)**Reissue****LISZT**

Tone-poems, etc

**Various orchestras /****Georg Solti, Iván Fischer**

Decca Eloquence

480 4920

'Needless to say, Solti revels in the music's generous drama, its soaring melodic lines and filmic narratives.'

► [REVIEW ON PAGE 93](#)

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*"Let Jan's playing take you to new heights"*

Born to Polish parents, Jan is fluent in three languages and, in lightning speed, already finished his schooling last year, simultaneous to signing an exclusive recording deal with the Yellow Label. Like many teenagers, he got his driver's license - but he is also taking pilot lessons so he can be free to discover and travel the world, to meet people and most importantly of course, to play the piano!

**Jan Lisiecki** **Mozart Piano Concerto's Nos. 20 & 21**

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## PODCASTS

We meet Korean pianist and EMI artist HJ Lim to talk Beethoven

## NEWS AND FEATURES

Latest stories and archive profiles; this month, contralto Kathleen Ferrier

## THE GRAMOPHONE PLAYER

Hear excerpts from the month's leading releases and explore our *Iberia* recommendations from the Collection

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*'Lim is a risk-taker...  
There's no doubting  
her strong personality  
and fervent commitment'*

Jed Distler, May 2012

PHOTOGRAPHY: ANNA-M. WEBER/EMI CLASSICS

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[pianostreet.com/albumblatt](http://pianostreet.com/albumblatt)

Free sheet music from [www.pianostreet.com](http://www.pianostreet.com)

ALBUMBLATT  
in A minor, Opus posth. (1853)

Johannes  
Brahms





# PRELUDES

On music, on musicians, on record

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PHOTOGRAPHY: BENJAMIN EALOVEGA





## Smile, you're on candid camera!

**Where**  
Watford Colosseum,  
Hertfordshire

**The details**  
Go Pro HD Hero camera  
attached to a  
double-bass scroll

Being camera-shy was not an option for players of the Philharmonia recently. In January, the orchestra, under Esa-Pekka Salonen, recorded Holst's *The Planets* for Signum Classics. Shot in a single day, filming involved 37 cameras capturing the orchestra from every possible angle – even if that meant players had to contend with miniature cameras on their instruments. The DVD/Blu-ray is out in June and will form the basis of Universe of Sound, a free exhibition at the Science Museum from May 23 to July 8 that combines music and science to provide audiences with an immersive orchestral experience. *Read a Session Report on this recording in the August issue*





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*More than 50 artists, including Nicholas Angelich, Martha Argerich, Khatia Buniatishvili, Gautier Capuçon, Renaud Capuçon, Nelson Goerner, Ilya Gringolts, Stephen Kovacevich, Polina Leschenko, Mischa Maisky, Gabriela Montero, Francesco Piemontesi, Maria João Pires, Torleif Thedéen, Sergio Tiempo, Lilya Zilberstein.*



# 'The Met has just announced a landmark 10 million Live in HD tickets sold'

The announcement by New York's Metropolitan Opera of its plans to screen the complete *Ring* cycle in cinemas worldwide has generated much interest – demonstrating once again the zealous dedication of Wagnerphiles across the globe. But the wider story here is the achievement in general of the company's Live in HD programme which, since its launch in 2006, has inspired several opera companies and orchestras to follow suit, notably the Berlin Phil, who also present live concerts online.

While the advantages are obvious – in the case of the *Ring* cycle, audiences from as far afield as Australia, Japan and Peru can watch Bryn Terfel, Deborah Voigt and Jonas Kaufmann in a new production by Robert Lepage on the New York stage – success at the outset was by no means a given. Cinematic audiences, accustomed to visiting their local multiplex for a blockbuster fix or smaller art-house venues for a dose of foreign culture, needed to be

*'Audiences needed to be persuaded that the buzz of live opera could be recreated to the sound of munching popcorn'*

persuaded that the buzz of the live operatic stage could be recreated to the sound of munching popcorn and slurping supersize cola.

Six years on, and the Met has just announced a landmark 10 million Live in HD tickets sold. Although the concept began in North America, Britain, Japan and Norway, it now has a truly international presence. This is down in no small part to its broadcasts in high-quality digital video, capable of showing far more detail than your average seat in the stalls would afford. Incorporating the cinema's existing strengths into screenings is also a winning strategy: the *Ring* goes hand in hand with the documentary *Wagner's Dream* by film-maker Susan Froemke about the creation of the new staging and most productions streamed across America in real time feature backstage footage and interviews during the interval.

What's certain is that the Met's desire to 'reach existing audiences and to introduce new audiences to opera through new technology', inspired by its long-running radio transmissions, does give rise



to the idea of opera for everyone. As the company says, the cinema transmissions represent the 'perfect, low-risk way to introduce a reluctant opera-goer to the art form'.

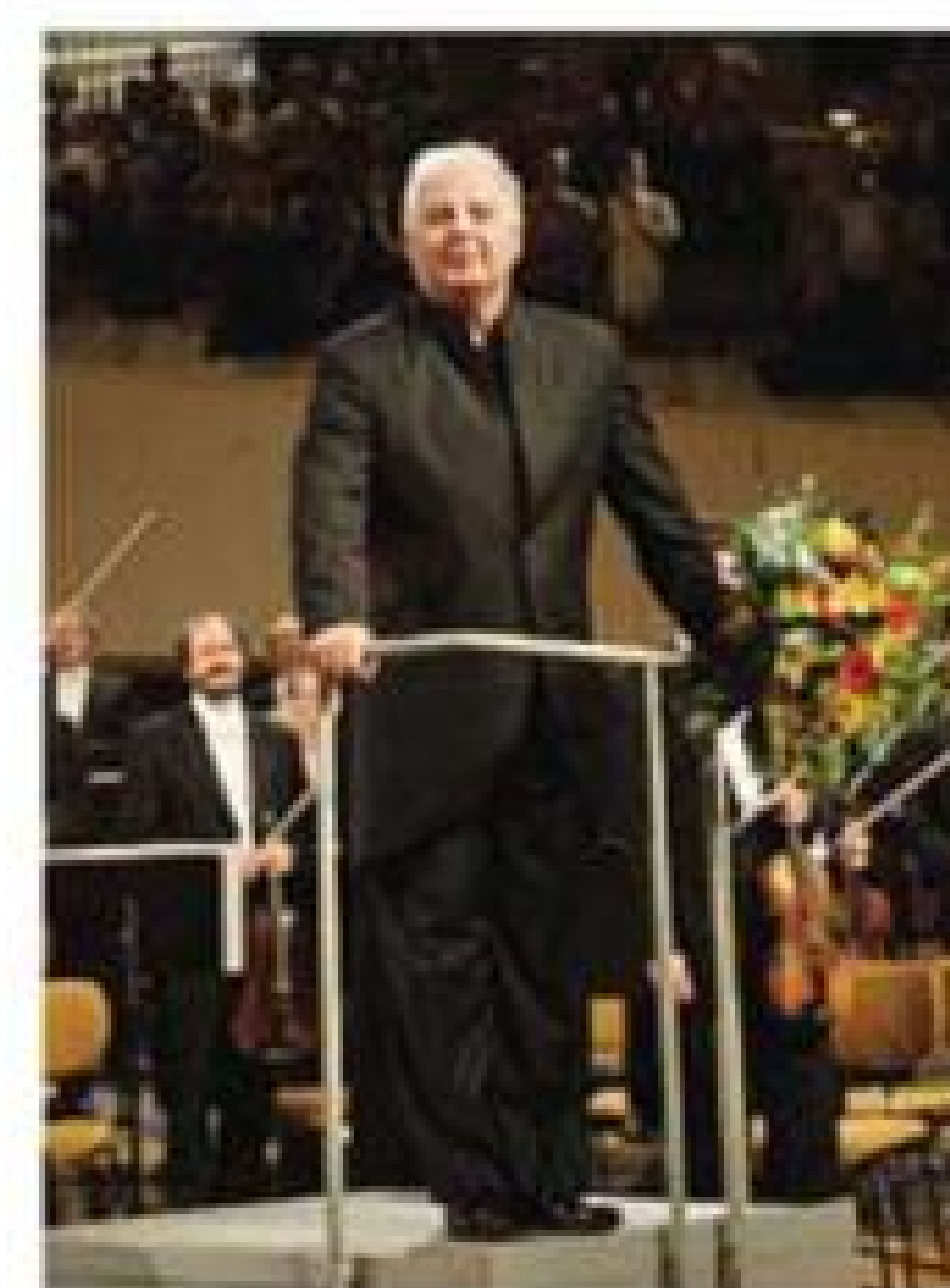
Long may they continue.

Arts awards came thick and fast this month, ranging from those designed to launch international careers to others recognising established musicians. In the latter category was Korea's €200,000 Ho-Am Prize, which this year went to composer Unsuk Chin. In the former category was the Wigmore Hall's String Quartet Competition, which awarded its £10,000 first prize to the Arcadia Quartet, and also the Menuhin Competition for talented violinists.

Triumphant in the Menuhin Junior round was 11-year-old Kevin Zhu, the competition's youngest-ever winner. The Senior round, won by Kenneth Arthur Renshaw, is hardly for mature performers, with an upper age limit of 22. While it's tempting to label such tender-aged competitions as hothouse breeding grounds fuelled by competitive parents and teachers, the Menuhin has been instrumental in launching the careers of Tasmin Little, Julia Fischer, Nikolaj Znaider and Ray Chen. Its list of laureates demonstrates a competition fulfilling its intended role in the best possible way – promoting leading talent on an international platform and encouraging young musicians to aspire to greater heights. **G**

## Specialist Classical Chart The UK's best-selling pure classical releases

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>1</b> (1) <b>Karl Jenkins - The Peacemakers</b><br>Crowe; Hanslip; LSO / Jenkins EMI Classics | <b>6</b> (11) <b>Mealor - A Tender Light</b><br>Tenebrae; RPO / Nigel Short Decca    |
| <b>2</b> (2) <b>'Illumina - Music of Light'</b><br>New College Choir, Oxford Decca               | <b>7</b> (4) <b>'Legacy' - Violin Works</b><br>David Garrett Decca                   |
| <b>3</b> (3) <b>Tony Banks - Six Pieces for Orch</b><br>Charlie Siem; City of Prague PO Naxos    | <b>8</b> (6) <b>Miloš - 'The Guitar'</b><br>Miloš DG                                 |
| <b>4</b> (New) <b>Bruckner - Symphony No 7</b><br>Staatskapelle Berlin / Barenboim DG            | <b>9</b> (7) <b>Rachmaninov - Symphonic Dances</b><br>LSO / Valery Gergiev LSO Live  |
| <b>5</b> (8) <b>Pärt - Creator Spiritus</b><br>Theatre of Voices / Hillier HM                    | <b>10</b> (13) <b>Anthony Hopkins - 'Composer'</b><br>CBSO / Michael Seal Classic FM |



Daniel Barenboim and the Staatskapelle Berlin enter the chart at number four

Chart for week ending April 14 (previous week's position in brackets). Visit [gramophone.co.uk](http://gramophone.co.uk) for weekly updates of the chart, along with reviews

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## MUSICIAN'S DIARY

# Jacqueline Thomas

The Brodsky Quartet's cellist on 40 years of music-making, Wheel of 4tunes anniversary concerts and impromptu recitals at airports

Embarking on the Wheel of 4tunes concerts – one of the projects we've devised to celebrate our 40th anniversary – is a scary prospect. The lovely team at Lancaster's Great Hall are completely up for the occasion – the wheel has been assembled and lit beautifully so it can be seen from all parts of the hall. Our music is strewn over the stage in piles of 10 – one for each section of the concert – and the realisation that we will only know what we are about to perform when the wheel is spun is beginning to dawn, terrifyingly. Fiona, tonight's promoter, will be the first to spin. We hold our breath as she gives the wheel a determined yank – Daniel films it on his iPhone. The wheel slows and comes to a stop on Purcell's *Chaconne*. We find the music, take up our positions and the concert begins. When it's over, everyone seems delighted – we perform three more times in the coming days to audiences excited by the spontaneity. Wheel concerts are booked across Europe and beyond throughout this anniversary year – they'll only get easier and more enjoyable.

It's hard to believe that as 11- and 12-year-olds back in 1972 we were creating something that would keep us busy for so many years to come. My brother Mike, Ian, Alex and I were as keen and eager for

*'Walking towards the gate, I am spotted by Paco, a ground crew member, who claims I'm an angel from heaven'*

this incredible music as any teen band getting together in their dad's garage after school. Looking in my old diaries I witness the excitement I felt when we decided to learn a particular work, or during our trips down to London for a competition when we would raid the huge oak shelves of Foyle's music department, spending our pocket money on expanding our library. Years later when the new Bärenreiter Edition of Beethoven landed on the doormat I felt the same sense of excitement – finally, ensembles were being offered exceptional insight into these incredible works, freed from the delusions of earlier editions which sought to interpret Beethoven's detailed markings, fabricating dynamics, bowings, articulation to the detriment of the music.

Shostakovich has been a huge part of our lives from the very beginning – No 11 being one of the first works we ever performed in '72 – and we grew up as the later works were being written and premiered. When Paul joined in '82 we gradually got all 15 under our belts and gave our first complete cycle at the QEH in 1989, followed by recordings for Teldec. After Daniel's arrival we have always kept these works close to our hearts – they will form part of our anniversary celebrations, with cycles over one weekend in several cities from London's Kings Place to the Sydney Opera House.

This anniversary season has been a whirlwind so far, with the launch of our exclusive contract with Chandos and the release of two CDs as



*At The Apex in Bury St Edmunds: the Wheel of 4tunes has been spun and the concert begins*



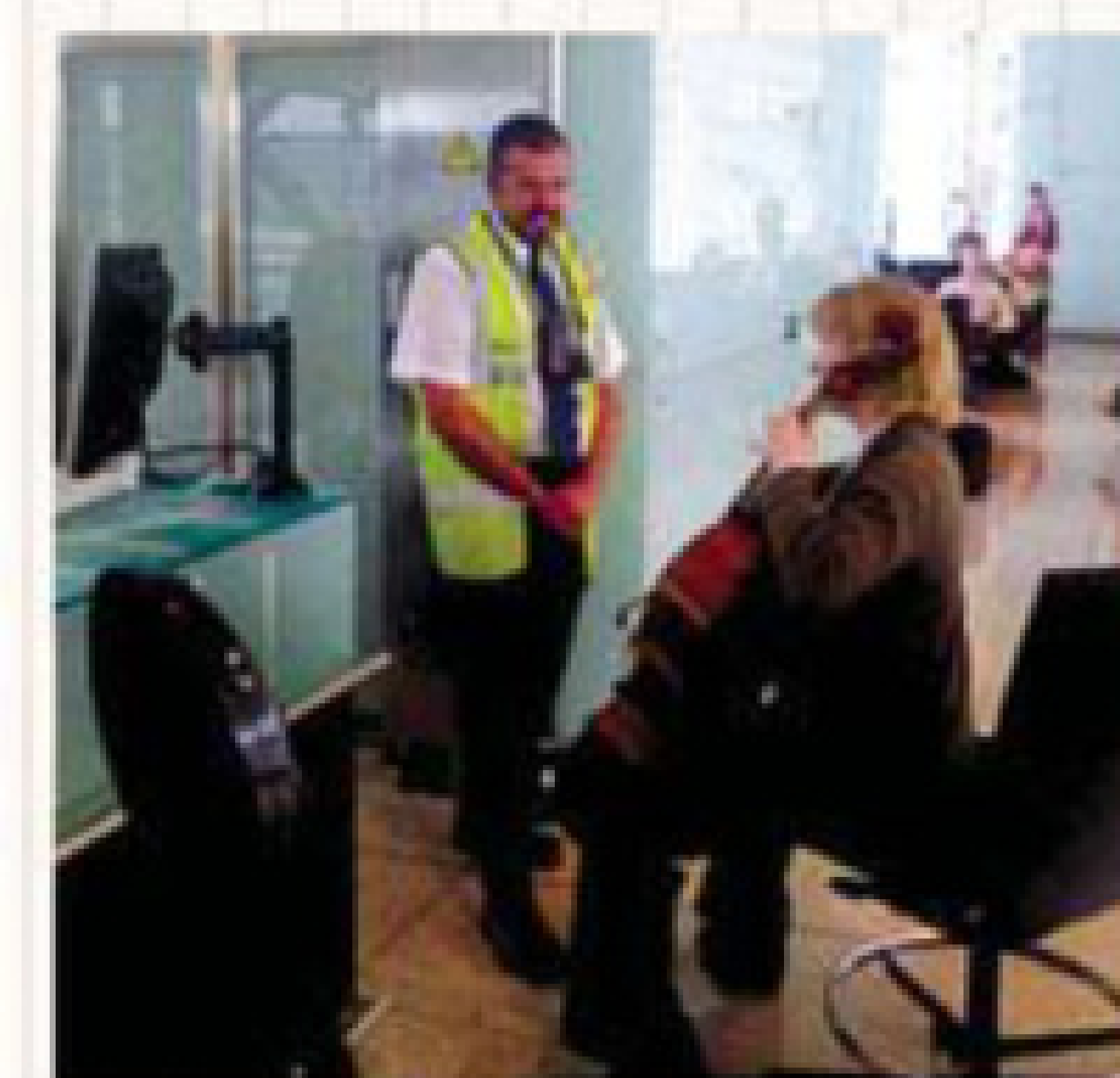
*Explaining the Wheel of 4tunes to the audience*



*Guessing at possible outcomes of the 'Wheel' in Lancaster's Great Hall*



*In Aldeburgh c.1978 to play the solo quartet in The Rape of Lucretia*



*Paco-Belle's Canon! Paco's foot is a good spike-holder...*

well as many exciting concerts. The first CD, 'Petits Fours', is a collection of our favourite encore arrangements; the second features Debussy's wonderful quartet (possibly my favourite quartet of them all – yikes), the early Piano Trio and *Dances sacrées et profanes*. To be joined by the fabulous Jean-Efflam Bavouzet, Sioned Williams and Chris Laurence for this CD has been a treat. Over the years we've recorded for various labels, including our own, but now feel really settled in the Chandos stable and look forward to many exciting projects ahead.

We have several masterclass events lined up for the season, too. We have just visited Glasgow and Cardiff colleges, with some in London to come in the spring, as well as in Sweden, France and Holland.

Coming to the end of this busy period which started in Japan and ended in Madrid, I'm on a flight home after playing at the Auditorio Nacional. Walking towards the gate, I am spotted by Paco, a ground crew member, who claims I'm an angel from heaven and suggests I play for him and the airport staff while we wait to board. This takes me back to times when mouthy bus drivers in Middlesbrough would shout, 'Shoulda taken up the flute' or 'Gizza tune'... But this time it seems genuine and something makes me want to oblige. I take out my cello and play 'The Swan' for him. He's beside himself with joy, the staff and passengers applaud, I ask for an upgrade...it's granted! ©

► To read Gramophone's review of the two Brodsky recordings, turn to page 58





# Disc of the Month

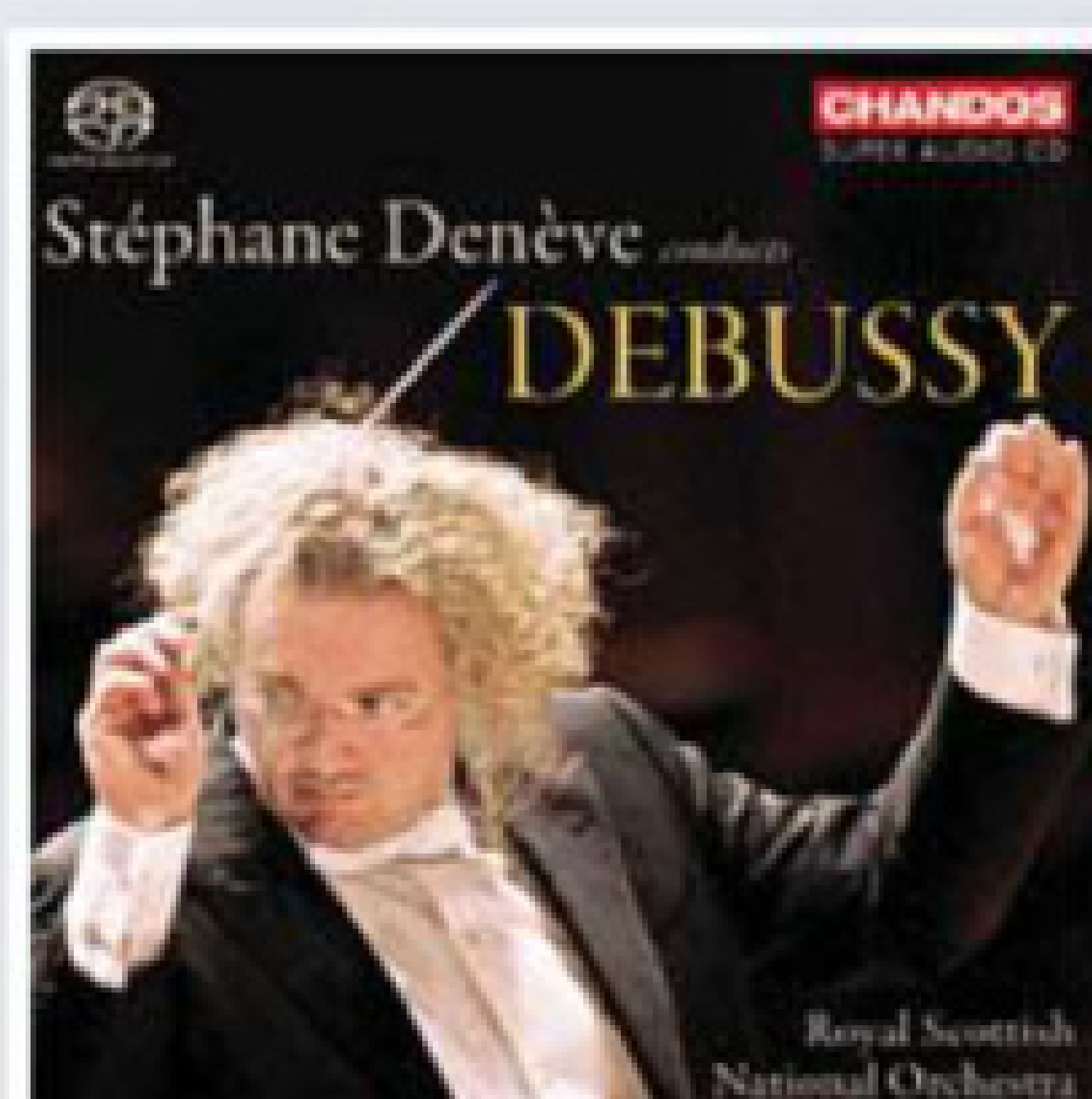
## Jean-Efflam Bavouzet

plays Beethoven Piano Sonatas, Vol. 1

To run parallel with his complete Haydn series, Jean-Efflam Bavouzet here starts a complete chronological cycle of Beethoven's piano sonatas. This three-disc set covers the early sonatas, composed in the 1790s. Two further volumes, of middle and late sonatas, will follow in 2013 and 2014, respectively.

CHAN 10720(3)

# CHANDOS New Releases



## Debussy Orchestral Works

After seven years as Music Director of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Stéphane Denève bids a fond farewell with a series of 'Au Revoir' concerts, and this two-disc set of orchestral works by Debussy, which includes *La Mer*, *Images*, *Nocturnes*, and *Jeux* among many others.

CHSA 5102(2)



## Weinberg Cello Concerto Symphony No. 20

This is Volume 4 in the series of orchestral works by Mieczysław Weinberg, performed by the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra under Thord Svedlund. A previous volume was nominated for a Grammy this year, in the Best Engineered Album category.

CHSA 5107



## Dvořák Piano Quintet No. 2 Piano Quartet No. 2

The Schubert Ensemble performs two of Dvořák's best-loved chamber works, the Piano Quintet No. 2 and Piano Quartet No. 2. Also on this disc: 'Songs My Mother Taught Me', from the cycle *Gypsy Songs*, arranged for piano quartet by the Schubert Ensemble.

CHAN 10719



## Casella Concerto for Orchestra A notte alta

The BBC Philharmonic and Gianandrea Noseda have recorded a second volume of orchestral works by Alfredo Casella. *International Record Review* wrote of the previous volume: 'Anyone with more than a passing interest in this fascinating composer needs to have this remarkable disc'.

CHAN 10712



## Handel Alceste

Handel's music for Tobias Smollett's play *Alceste* is here performed by the Early Opera Company and Christian Curnyn, whose other Handel recordings for Chandos have received glowing accolades. The recording of *Flavio* was nominated for a Gramophone Award last year, in the Baroque Vocal category.

CHAN 0788

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## SESSION REPORT The Dunedin Consort

Work *Handel's Esther* (Cannons version, HWV50a)

Artists *Dunedin Consort and Players / John Butt (harpsichord)*

Venue *Greyfriars Kirk, Edinburgh* Producer *Philip Hobbs*

Engineers *Philip Hobbs, Calum Malcolm* Dates of sessions *July 9-15, 2011* Words *David Vickers*

It's a tranquil pleasure to stroll the streets of Edinburgh on the way to Greyfriars Kirk during cool sunny weather. The first church in the Scottish capital city to be built after the Reformation, it attracts many tourists because of the legend of Greyfriars Bobby, the loyal Skye terrier who reputedly sat every day on the grave of his master. The broader cultural, political and religious history of Scotland is commemorated by other significant monuments in the graveyard, such as memorials to leading Scottish poets, architects and scientists. This week, though, the church has been taken over by the Dunedin Consort and Players. Director and harpsichordist John Butt hopes to construct a new kind of artistic monument inside the church: a recording of Handel's first English oratorio, *Esther*, which adopts significant new research into the score as well as the performing forces used for its performance at Cannons in c1720.

Christopher Hogwood and Harry Christophers both made excellent recordings of *Esther* before new evidence came to light about its peculiar genesis and text. A few years ago, one musician who appeared on both versions confided to me that he had never actually performed the oratorio all the way through. To avoid this pitfall, Linn's producer and engineer, Philip Hobbs, spends the first day setting 16 microphones while the performers rehearse. All participants swiftly acquire a rounded grasp of the dramatic shape and musical flow of *Esther*. Some musicians are only playing in a few numbers but nobody seems to get bored. As viola player Jane Rogers excitedly remarks, 'Wow, what a great piece! But I'm one of those strange kind of folk who actually love to listen when I'm not playing.' That evening, a private concert

*'It's fantastic fun singing in the choruses but I have to leave enough in the tank for my arias'*

*— James Gilchrist*

performance is given for an audience of friends and sponsors. The uncluttered interior of Greyfriars is elegantly simple and during the concert the summer evening light continues to stream through the modest stained-glass windows. The Dunedin Consort have three artistic directors: co-founder and principal soprano Susan Hamilton (who sings *Esther*), Baroque music polymath and harpsichordist John Butt, and also their recording producer Hobbs. In the vestry-turned-control room after the concert, Hobbs enthuses that some of the live concert recording was good enough to use in the final edit. Butt has prepared his own new performing edition based on a thorough investigation of all the important historical, musical and literary sources, and Hobbs has already started scribbling annotations on his copy of the score that will guide him during the editing process much later on.

The 11 singers and orchestra of 20 are delighted by their labours. Dunedin stalwarts Hamilton, Thomas Hobbs and Matthew Brook play prominent parts; Brook's performance of the villain Haman's






- 1 John Butt rehearses the Dunedins from the harpsichord. His 'genuine scholarship' is admired by all  
2 Matthew Brook's performance of villain Haman's 'Turn not, O Queen' transfixes everyone

- 3 Susan Hamilton as Esther; her student Electra Lochhead also sings on the recording  
4 'Camaraderie among the ranks': the 11 singers and orchestra of 20 seem 'delighted by their labours'

'Turn not, O Queen' transfixes everyone, and Thomas Hobbs's perfectionism is evident in his self-critical responses in the control room to hearing his own singing of 'Tune your harps'; the players responsible for the *pizzicato* strings and oboe accompaniment huddle behind him and whisper 'It's gorgeous!', but during playback Butt notices that the pace slows in the *da capo*, so they return to the church to create 'a more elegant sense of movement'. Harpist Frances Kelly plays nimble solos in 'Praise the Lord with cheerful voice', sung by teenager Electra Lochhead, one of Hamilton's pupils at St Mary's Music School. In advance of Lochhead's session, Hamilton listens to the live concert playback and makes constructive preparations; she suggests that 'More "w" in 'choir' would be ideal', and tells me that she is impressed that 'you only have to tell her something once and she does it – she's incredibly bright and quick'.

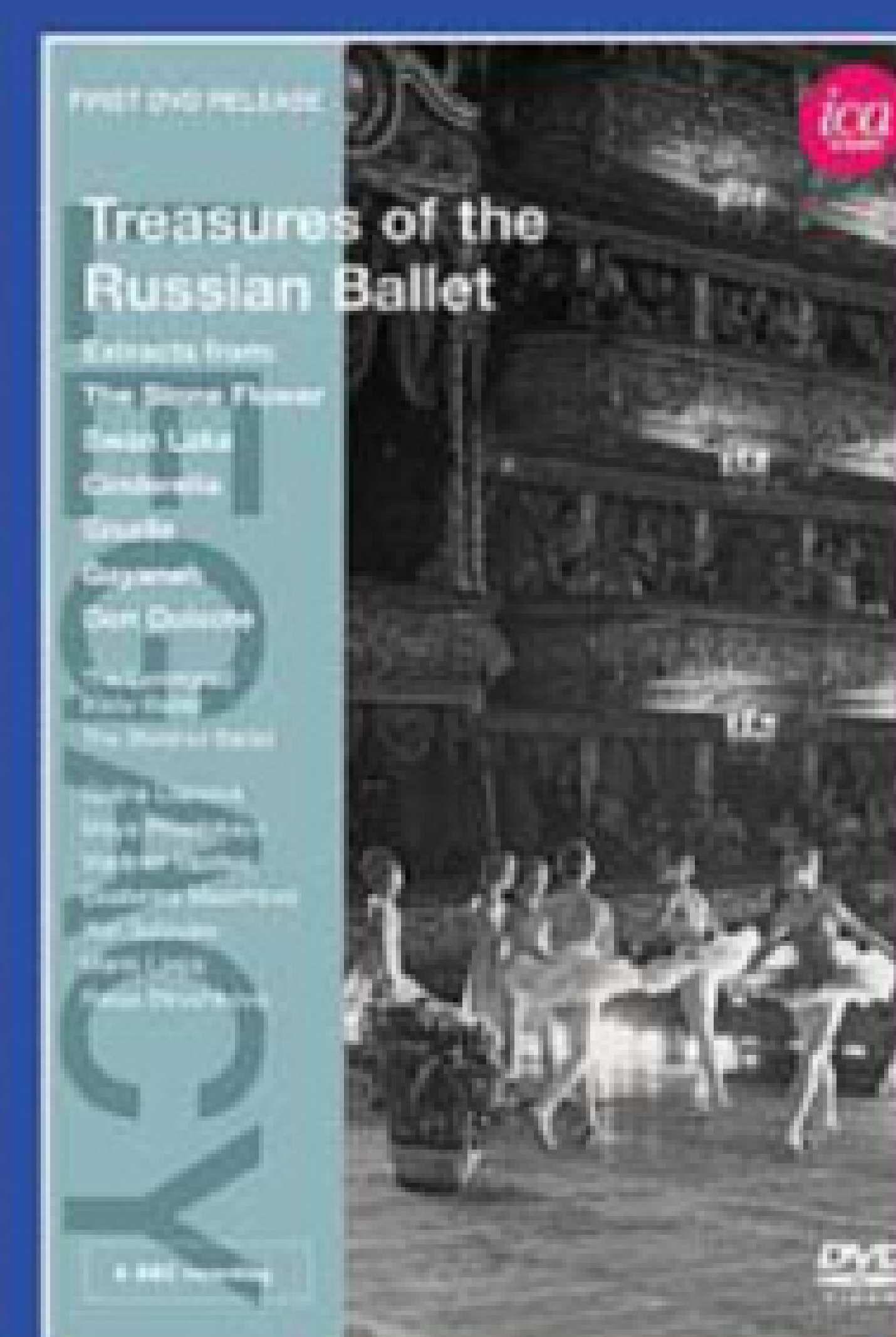
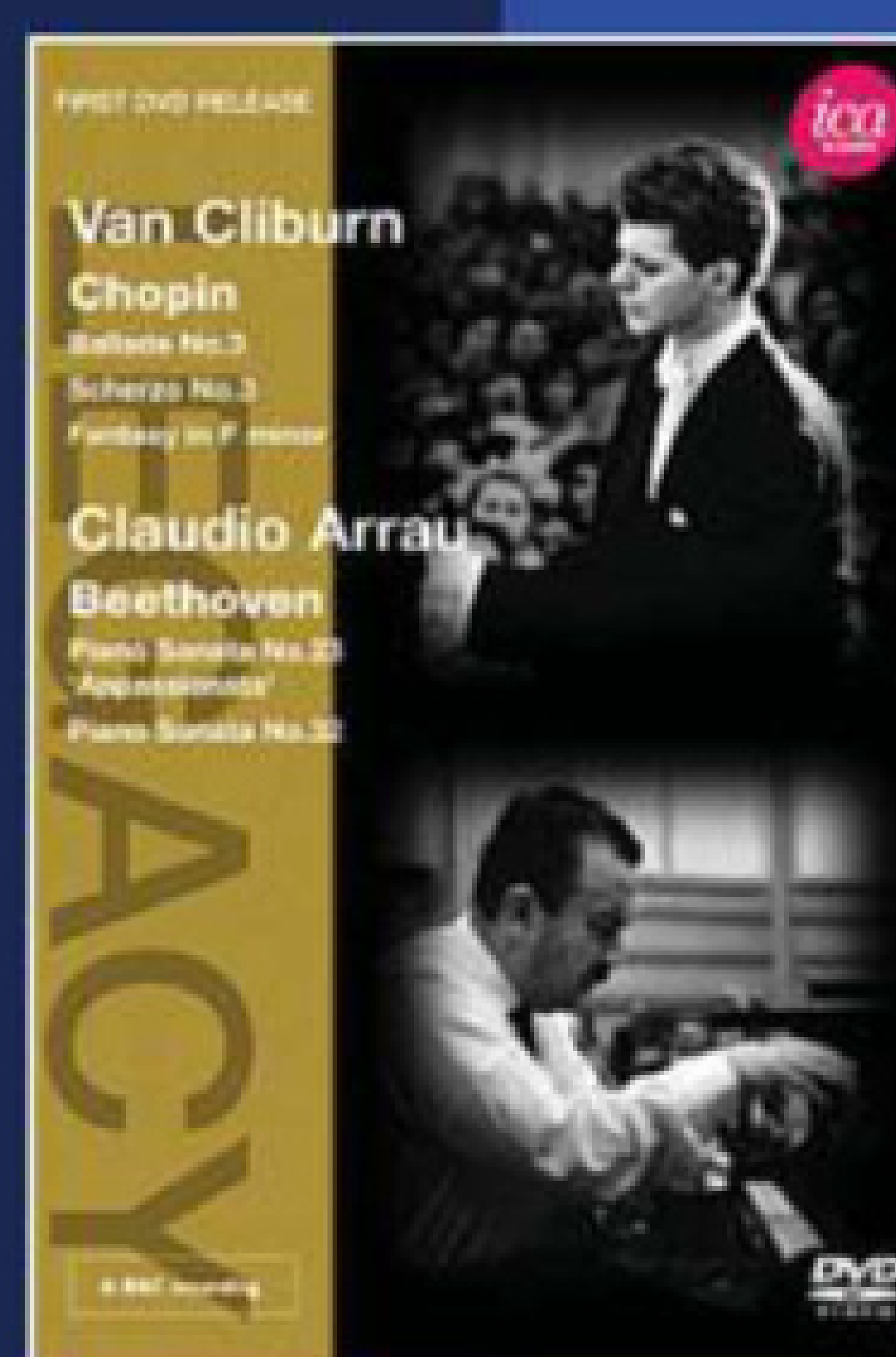
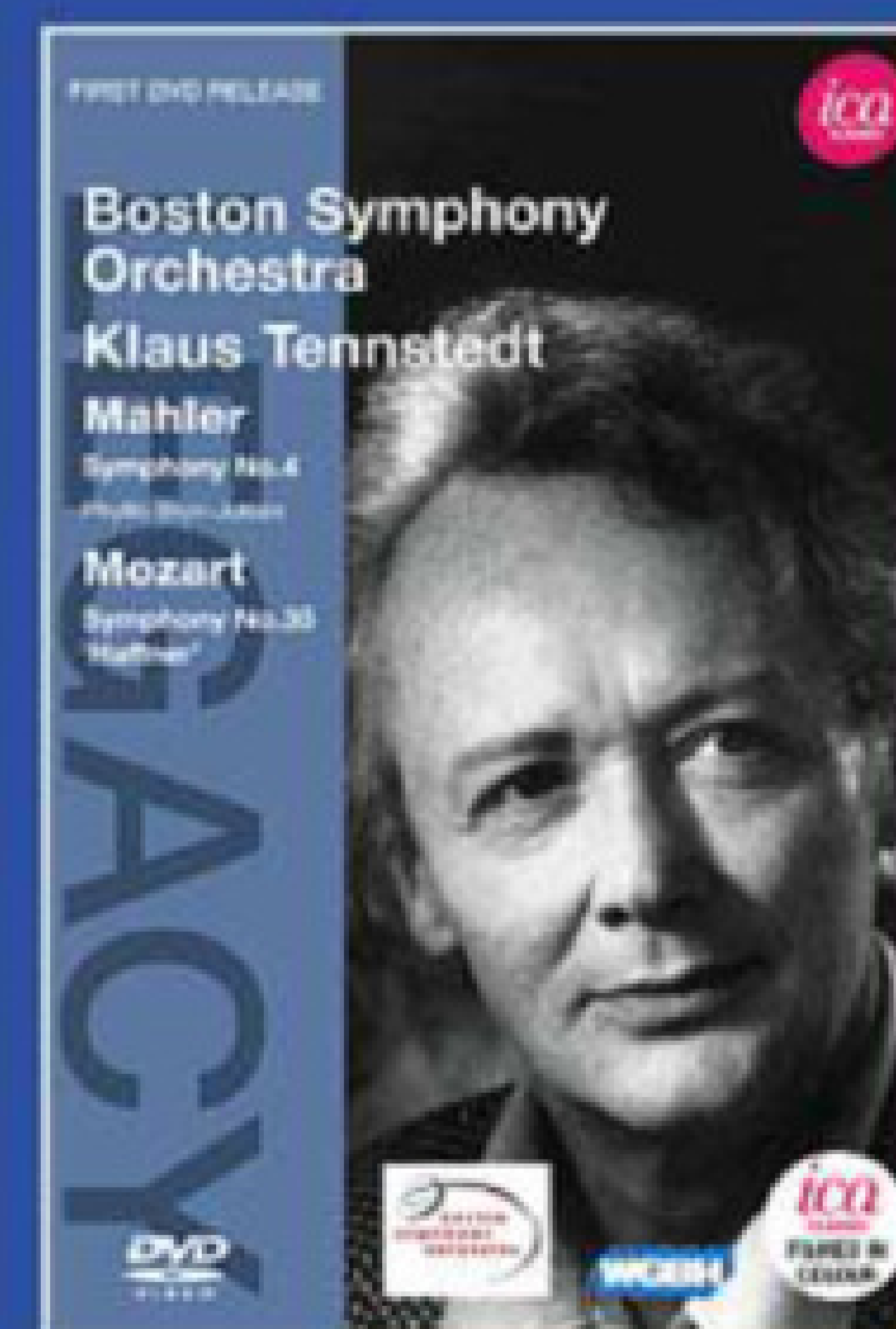
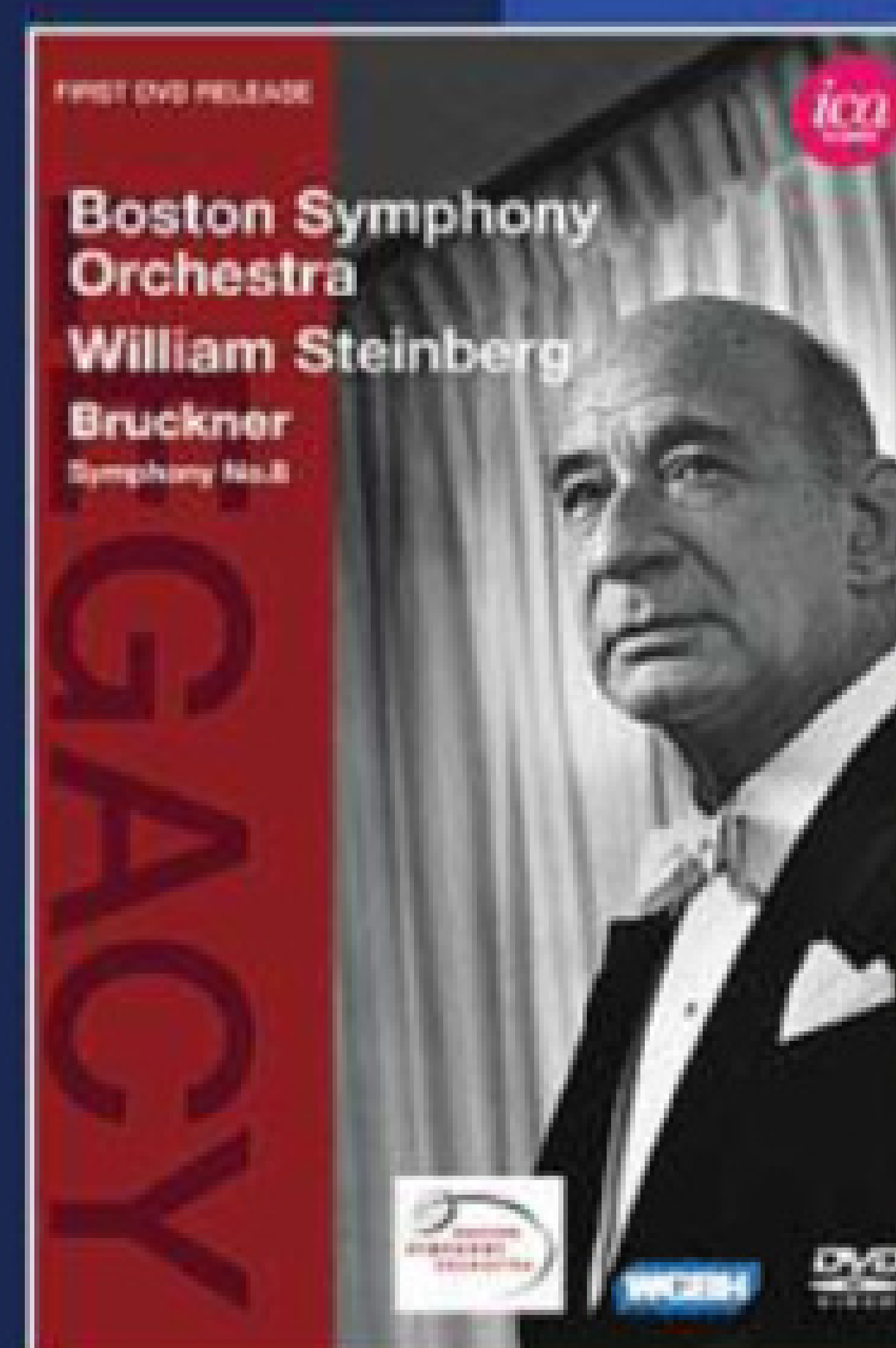
Robin Blaze and James Gilchrist are making their first recording with the Dunedins and are having a great time. The splendid chorus 'Jehovah crown'd with glory bright' has an exhilarating introduction for Blaze's High Priest, with gutsy horns from Anneke Scott and Joe Walters (who tell me that Butt has simply given them a free hand to go to town on it). There's fantastic camaraderie among the ranks and plenty of irreverent laughs. As Gilchrist admits, 'It's fantastic fun singing in the choruses but I've got to be careful not to overdo it so that there's enough left in the tank for when I record my arias.'

Butt's extrovert humour causes plenty of memorable moments. During the overture, he excitedly encourages the orchestra to 'get a bit more excited about arriving in F major!' He shrewdly reminds everyone that the chorus 'Shall we of servitude complain' is like a minuet – the observation instantly transforms its intimacy. Butt works tirelessly to make the music conversational; he often gets the chorus to whisper the words in order to get word-stresses exactly right. The final chorus, 'The Lord our enemy has slain', is a big Purcellian verse anthem in which trumpeter Paul Sharp makes his only appearance; he tells me he loves playing with the Dunedins and their director: 'It's so refreshing to play for someone whose genuine scholarship gives everything we do such kudos, but who is also totally devoid of ego – that's rare and really special.' 

► To read Gramophone's review, turn to page 77



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# Rued Langgaard

Andrew Mellor argues the case for Danish music's forgotten genius as his music begins to gain prominence 60 years after his death

At a meeting of European composers in Stockholm in the late 1960s, the great Hungarian modernist György Ligeti announced to the assembled minds that he considered himself 'a disciple of Langgaard'. It would have revealed a good deal about Ligeti's musical world-view – his singular reimagining of music's parameters of time and space. But instead it left the room rather baffled. Nobody had a clue who Langgaard was.

If one or two did know of him, they'd doubtless have tittered at Ligeti's remark. Rued Langgaard had been a standing joke in Danish music; a loner, a freak and an outcast. Of his 16 symphonies, seven string quartets, numerous miscellaneous works and an apocalyptic opera, *Antikrist*, none were commissioned and half were never performed in his lifetime. While he trod this earth, Langgaard had no mentors, no pupils and few admirers. His troubled relationship with the Danish cultural establishment fluctuated between enthusiastic pleading and vitriolic anger – the latter often in musical form.

Ideologies strange and pressing forced Langgaard into serious creativity from the age of 11. He railed against the spiritual state of the world and the reversal (as he saw it) of musical progress. But his creations sprang from emotional prompts, too: his isolation, his religious fervour and what we can fairly assume was the torture of mental illness. Works of gregarious and liberated joy are the inevitable peaks against his troughs of depression and anger. Snobbery and circumstance might have trampled on Rued Langgaard, but they lent his music a strange, variegated urgency and power in the process.

Langgaard did experience major success – once. Aged 19 he had his astoundingly assured First Symphony inaugurated by the Berlin Philharmonic under Max Fiedler. It proved, in the words of the composer's biographer Bendt Viinholt Nielsen, 'the climax of his whole career'. War then tore through mainland Europe and by the time it was over Denmark had its musical figurehead – man of the people Carl Nielsen. Langgaard's lofty visions of music as the father of both politics and religion felt awkward and aloof. Nielsen, for Langgaard, became the embodiment of the problem.

But it didn't stop Langgaard writing. From a loosely post-Romantic basis, his voice shot off in an array of hyperinnovative directions just as frequently as it sought refuge in old certainties and disciplines. The First Symphony rides the crest of Straussian orchestral craft; the 15 that follow leap both forwards to minimalism and experimentalism and backwards to traditions past. While Nielsen's *Inextinguishable* was drying on the page in 1916, Langgaard was hatching plans to instruct a solo pianist to knock on the woodwork of the instrument and strum its strings in *Insektarium*, his fantastical depiction of mystery critters. When the *Inextinguishable* was eventually recognised as the apex of Danish symphonic thought, Langgaard reacted with a homage – the anxious, energy-harboured Sixth Symphony. When Nielsen was posthumously commemorated in a 1948 biography, Langgaard spawned the spoof cantata *Carl Nielsen, our great composer*, to be sung 'with all possible force' and 'repeated for all eternity'.

If those gestures tell us anything about Langgaard, it's that he viewed his art as a means of communication across the board – from expressing visions of the divine to playing out petty spats. Langgaard

wasn't a dabbler or an academic, he was an obsessive and a dynamo. Shunned and ultimately exiled far from Copenhagen, music was all he had. His finest works wed exceptional craft to palpable expressive need. They contain some of the most unusual musical textures of their age, yet rarely sound contrived. In the greatest litmus test of all, they leave an emotional residue that approaches the Mahlerian.

That might be a rather personal assessment, but in that sense it's also irrefutable. Langgaard has been the biggest surprise-discovery of my musical life, exploring his oeuvre akin to stumbling upon a second Barber or Martinů. The music never fails to surprise: from the far-flung, spinning sonorities of his *Music of the Spheres* (not, for me, his masterpiece) to the tautness of his Fourth Symphony – its poise incomparable, Brahmsian twists in colour and mood seen as if through a kaleidoscope of late-20th-century irreverence.

On one level Langgaard has become an icon of injustice. His lack of success remains chilling, despite its self-perpetuation. Denmark's diverse contemporary music scene might have learnt some lessons from that, but now we must judge his music on its own terms. And for all the big gestures at play therein, it's a simple choral song to which I often return to validate my own discipleship. In *Høstfuglen*, Langgaard sets a text by Herman Wildenvey for four voices. It's all here – the delicate melodic gift, the exquisite distribution of material, the distinct mood within a few bars, the visionary technical effects. But there's something bigger underneath it all: Langgaard's ability, with all those facets in play, to distil his ideas right down to music of the most lucid simplicity and touching sincerity. For a moment I think of Mozart. But I soon snap out of that, and think only of Langgaard. **G**

► The Nightingale String Quartet's recording of Langgaard's String Quartets Nos 2, 3 and 6 is reviewed on page 59

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## DEFINING MOMENTS

### • 1905 – *Copenhagen debut*

An 11-year-old Langgaard gives his first organ recital in Copenhagen. He impresses, yet fails to attain a permanent organist position in Denmark for 35 years.

### • 1940 – *Exile in Ribe*

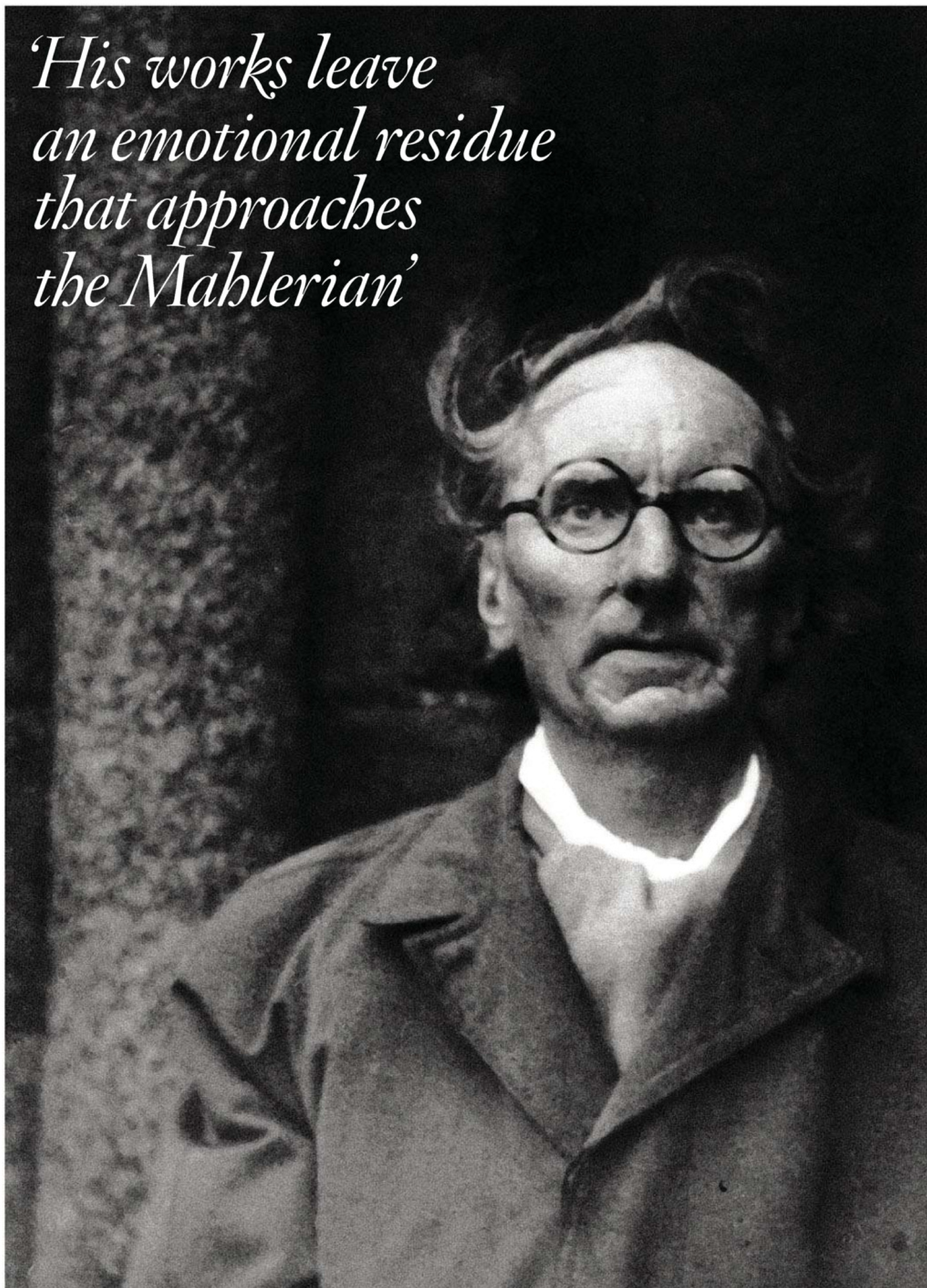
Langgaard is appointed organist at Ribe Cathedral, 150 miles from Copenhagen. Cut off, Haydn-like, he writes his last eight symphonies and dies in Ribe in 1952.

### • 1992 – *First recorded symphony cycle*

Dacapo issues the first complete cycle of Langgaard's symphonies on CD. Enthusiastic performances under Ilya Stupel form the precursor to Dausgaard's 2009 cycle.



*'His works leave  
an emotional residue  
that approaches  
the Mahlerian'*





# Songs and Proverbs of William Blake

*Roderick Williams* on Britten's Blake settings, in conversation with Richard Fairman

It's only a few minutes into our meeting at the BBC when it becomes clear that Roderick Williams has an unusual insight into Britten's William Blake settings, which he has recorded with Iain Burnside for Naxos. Just before Christmas he had been invited, together with soprano Joan Rodgers, to Moscow's December Nights Festival, which had a special Blake theme. 'We were performing in a gallery with his drawings and etchings around the walls,' says Williams. 'I was singing the Britten cycle and Joan sang the Vaughan Williams songs with oboe. While she was rehearsing, I had the opportunity to go round the exhibition looking at these amazing images at the same time as I was hearing Blake speaking directly through the songs. It was a unique experience.'

Forewarned that this *Gramophone* series involves a detailed discussion of the music, he has brought along the score of the *Songs and Proverbs of William Blake*. As he opens it, he points to the poems printed separately at the front and remarks how helpful that can be, especially if the settings involve long, slow-moving lines.

The Blake cycle repays careful study of the music on the page. A significant proportion of it is based on 12-tone rows – 'like parts of Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,' says Williams – and it can help the singer understand the settings if he follows them through. 'I remember plotting Webern's tightly packed tone rows in his Concerto for Nine Instruments when I was at school,' he says, 'but with Britten you always feel he is making music out of them, like Berg.'

We study the 12-tone melody that threads through 'A Poison Tree', the third song. 'As I tread my way carefully in and out of the semitones at the words "And I water'd it in fears", I try to relate to the bass-line in the piano,' says Williams. 'But it isn't easy, and you

*'I had the opportunity to look at Blake's images as I was hearing Blake speaking through the songs – a unique experience'*

can sense Britten is ticking off the 12 tones as he goes. There's a lot of counterpoint in this song, which makes it look like a page out of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*. I feel I almost need to wash my hands after I've sung it. It's well known that Britten dropped people from his circle and you wonder if he saw himself in this song when you read the last line – "glad I see, My foe outstretch'd beneath the tree". That makes the hairs go up on the back of my neck!' For a minute or




Roderick Williams: Blake has the power 'to make the hairs on my neck go up'

two we speculate on the possibility that Britten may have cultivated his own 'poison tree' in the back garden at the Red House.

The sequence of Proverbs is also derived from a 12-tone row, and Williams points out places where that can create difficulties in pitching the notes. 'In Proverb III there's a long B flat on the word "Man", where the singer has to wait for the pianist to settle, and the accompaniment arrives on a semitone clash with an A' – one of several awkward moments we discuss.

In this series, the question is often which edition to use, or whether going back to the composer's manuscript might help. Not so here, as the printed score is as definitive as it gets. But I point out that there is one other 'original' source that Williams might have consulted: the composer's own recording with Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. 'This work was on my shelves for some time before I had the courage to look at it,' he admits, 'so I knew the recording before I started to study the music seriously. There are many things to enjoy there, but Fischer-Dieskau's singing of it is quite a hard rugby tackle, isn't it?'

Were there any points at which he consulted the recording to hear how Britten and Fischer-Dieskau handled certain details? 'No,' he says. 'It's just at those specific moments where you can liberate yourself by not going back to the recording. You say to yourself, "I've got the score here and I'll sing it exactly as Britten says because he is so fastidious in his markings." Then, if it diverges from the [original] recording, surely that's a good thing?' 

► To read *Gramophone's* review, turn to page 74



## The historical view

### *Benjamin Britten*

*To Peter Pears, March 16, 1965 from Letters from a Life: The Selected Letters of Benjamin Britten, Vol 5*

'I'm getting on quite well with the Blake, but finding it pretty difficult and doubtful. Frankly, I find other singers rather non-inspiring to write for – I'm too choosy about the performers I fear!'

### *Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau*

*Echoes of a Lifetime, translated by Ruth Hein*

'I was especially taken with the terseness, the British understatement, the intellectual concentration, and the enigmatic smile of [Blake's] dense, linguistically original sayings. I came to value them truly later on, when I had the opportunity to see this early surrealist's watercolours in the Tate Gallery.'

### *Peter Evans*

*The Music of Benjamin Britten*

'The Blake cycle may never become one of Britten's more popular sets of songs, for its despondency is not of the easy kind in which audiences like to envelop themselves. But these [darker] reflections on the human condition...are among his most disturbing achievements.'



## QUIZ



Arthur Rubinstein, one of the piano legends with whom I worked

## Who am I?

Pit your wits against Gramophone

I played the cello in the premiere of a work but waited 60 years before recording it – to great acclaim. Although this work has been blessed with many fabulous recordings, some good judges believe mine to be one of the finest.

The septuagenarian composer was in the latter stages of a distinguished career that notable night, but he still had one further indisputably great work in him – and that is one that I was later to record twice, with a 13-year gap between my two attempts.

Over my long career I made numerous recordings and worked with many of the greats, including Vladimir Horowitz, Jascha Heifetz and Arthur Rubinstein.

I married a teenager and, while I wasn't strictly faithful, we remained married for more than 50 years, until my wife died. One of our daughters married one of my musical collaborators.

Although it was not the land of my birth, I spent many very productive years in the United States. But I never took American nationality and was eventually buried back in my homeland.



Jascha Heifetz: a fiddling friend

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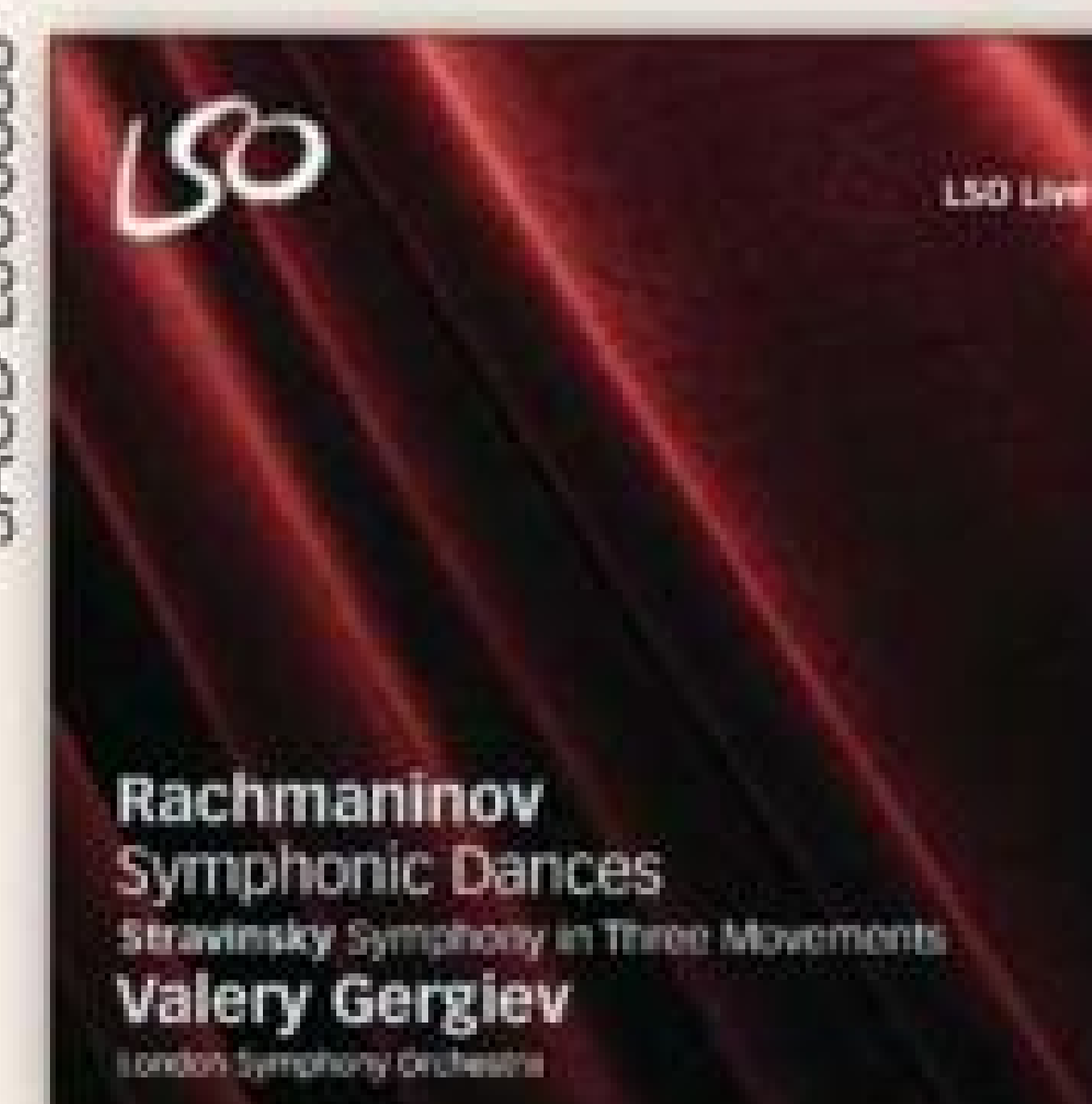


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# REACHING OUT

Miloš Karadaglić – or Miloš as he's known these days – believes the guitar has the power to connect. He talks to Martin Cullingford about his desire to bring it further out of its niche

It may seem odd, after dominating the Specialist Classical Chart for much of the year with his debut disc, to be using a word like 'niche'. But on his website Miloš declares: 'The guitar repertoire is wonderful and there is a lot of it. It needs to be brought out of its niche and to have a renaissance. This is my mission!' And who are we to argue: after all, when was the last time a guitarist made it onto the cover of *Gramophone*?

For someone so intent on spreading the musical word, being young, photogenic and blessed with a talent for confident stage repartee is – in this image-conscious world of ours – not a bad starting point. Fortunately, Miloš is also a very fine guitarist. His first disc – called either 'Mediterraneo' or 'The Guitar', depending on which country you live in – gathered together some of the most iconic pieces from the heartland of the instrument's repertoire, including works by Tárrega, Albéniz and Granados. It was about 'showing the essence of my instrument, and the essence of who I am,' he explains. Its success earned it the Specialist Classical Chart Award at last year's *Gramophone* Classical Music Awards, where Miloš was also named Young Artist of the Year.

When we meet to talk about, among other things, his follow-up recording, I ask whether his debut disc's success surprised him. 'No, because I really, really strongly believe in the power of the guitar. That's why I fought so hard for so long before any of this happened. I thought, ok, maybe I can't have a career which is strongly based on concertos, like a violinist, but I can have a career which is much more than that, because I play the most popular instrument on the planet.'

A fair point. While not everyone will know their Tárrega from their Sor, it's a fair bet that a good number can wrap their fingers around a few basic chord shapes. 'Of all classical instruments, the guitar is the most accessible – because it is the guitar,' Miloš says. 'After the human voice it's the next thing people reach for to express their musicality. Everyone wants to touch a guitar and play a few chords. So anybody

who has ever done that, even if they hear the most complicated classical guitar piece, will connect to it better than if they hear a piece of Chopin or Schubert for the first time.'

Another reason Miloš believes so strongly that the classical guitar can reach beyond today's following – the niche to which he refers – is that, as he grew up in Montenegro, a small country with no classical guitar tradition, there was simply no niche in which he could feel a part. Forced to forge his own path, he was listened to without preconceptions: audiences, living through a period of conflict and uncertainty, simply enjoyed the music-making of a local boy with an evidently exceptional talent. 'I was part of the mainstream, because I lived in a small country that embraced my talent, and I was respected no matter what instrument I played. I just had the most amazing childhood and time doing that. I also realised the guitar was a tool to make wonderful music – not guitar music. And I realised that what I wanted to be was a musician, not a guitarist. I was playing back then both for people who knew classical music, and for people who were living in villages and had never got in touch with classical music at all. And the power of this instrument was so, so massive and so strong.'

A medieval church in a wintry Kent village might have seemed an odd place to record a programme of South American music; Miloš's second disc features works by Villa-Lobos and Barrios among others. England in January is a very long way from sun-drenched savannahs and the melancholy rhythms of the tango. 'Trust me, it was very cold,' recalls Miloš. As one of the production team pointed out to him: 'We're recording this hot-blooded repertoire in the chilliest of all places, called Chilham.' But the venue wasn't chosen lightly. 'We went around the country, scouting a few churches – you immediately get that gut feeling about somewhere.' Miloš was looking for 'warmth of sound, that feeling of being able to pull sounds out of your instrument, which doesn't happen in a room with carpets. We got that. There were moments in the recording when I was getting goose bumps all over



the place.' And not just from the cold we assume. 'Playing this music in a cold church gives it another kick. The feeling you get when playing this music is so hot. It just makes your whole body feel something. And the fact that the church was cold maybe even amplified that feeling.'

If Miloš's first disc focused on music from, or near, the classical guitar's Iberian heartland, the second settles on an area where the instrument is no less embedded. 'It was such a natural step after "Mediterraneo", because of the repertoire. The guitar is so embraced in that part of the world, and the music that is written is so suited to the guitar – it has that slightly even more human feeling.'

Almost as unlikely a venue as a freezing Kent village for languishing in the soulful sounds of South America must be London's elegantly formal, traditional temple of chamber music, Wigmore Hall, where Miloš performed in early March.

'This is the earliest I've ever given a recital,' he said, as he took to the stage for an 11.30am Sunday morning coffee (or, sherry, if that's your tippie of choice) concert. The early hour didn't seem to affect him though, and the repartee was as charm-filled as the performances were stylish. The programme ended with an intensely physical Villa-Lobos study which, Miloš warned us, might sound as if something had gone wrong with the guitar. 'It's ok,' he assured us, 'she can take it.'

It seems appropriate that he personalises his guitar, as he's evidently very fond of it. It's by the Australian luthier Greg Smallman, whose innovative approach to construction allows for a very thin soundboard, which has a significant impact on both volume and tone. Smallman's instruments were first given prominence by John Williams, and you'll also see Chinese guitarist Xuefei Yang playing one in certain repertoire. Miloš uses his all the time. 'I just love my guitar – it's like a Ferrari, the sound is so rich. It's different from a traditional, Spanish Torres-model guitar. It's bigger, yes, but the colour of it is different too.'

'On the guitar you can create sound which penetrates your stomach. The way you produce that sound, it's almost like it's coming from inside you. I like to explore those different sound qualities on the guitar – you

can create a sound like a harpsichord, and then you do another thing and sound like a grand piano – any sound you can imagine in your head, you can do on your guitar.' And few acoustics, of course, better support subtlety of sound exploration than the Wigmore's famed shoebox chamber.

But we might not have been hearing Miloš at Wigmore at all, had the 20th century's most iconic guitarist, Andrés Segovia, not intervened – via an old recording. 'I was about to give up classical guitar because it wasn't meeting my expectations,' Miloš recalls. 'I wanted to play guitar where I would strum a few chords and use my pretty voice, and just be cool – I nearly went off in a different direction; I was ready to walk away.' That is, until his father put on a recording of Segovia playing the dramatic, evocative tremolo-based piece *Asturias* by Albéniz.

'I completely fell in love with his sound. I felt that being able to create this magic on an instrument which is so fragile and so small, and move your fingers to create so many layers of sound, to me was so exciting.

If that hadn't happened I would

probably be a doctor. Which might not have been a bad thing!

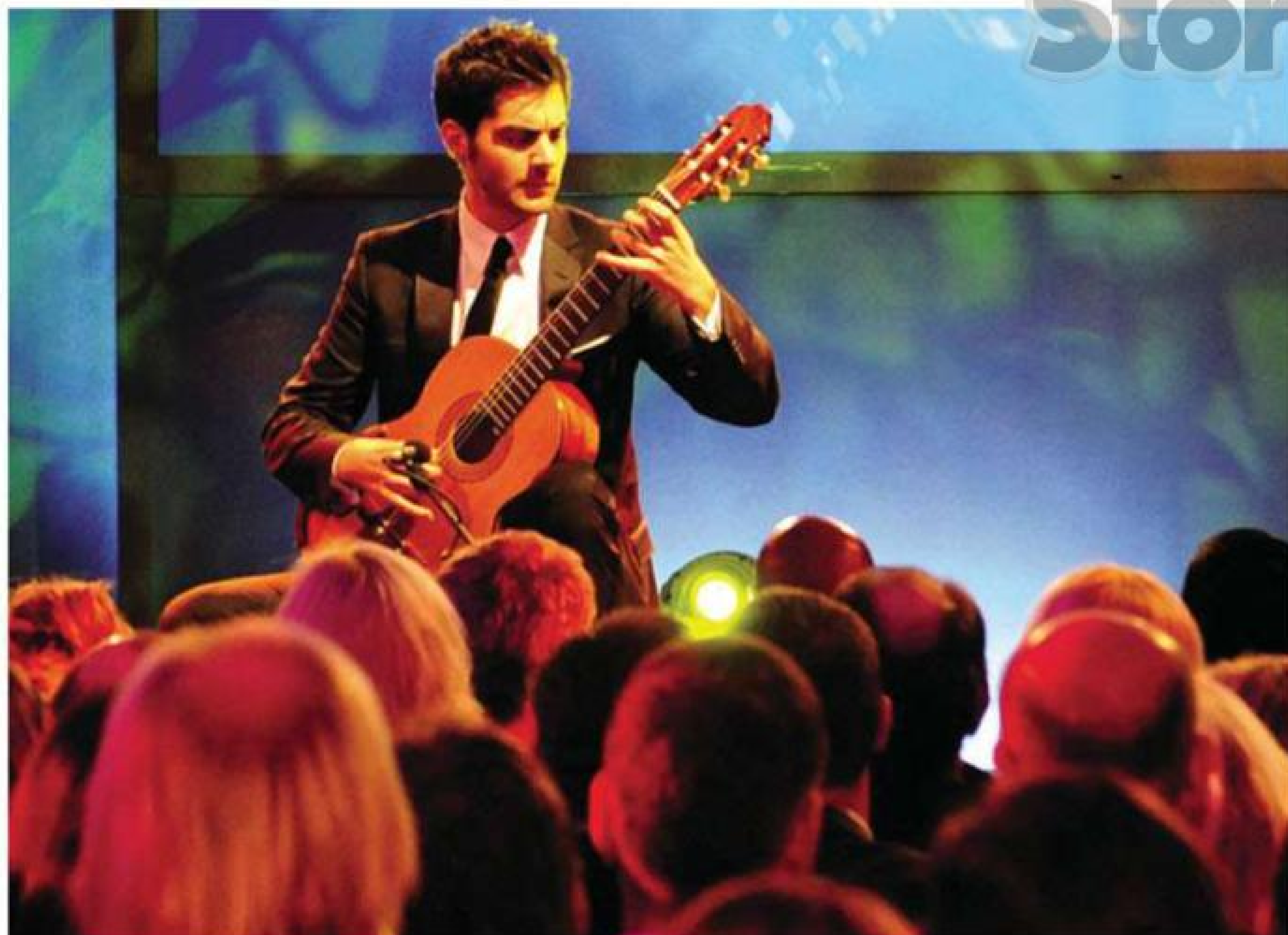
'For a classical guitarist, Segovia is like Maria Callas is for a soprano. And there will be clever people who criticise everything he did, forgetting that what he did at that time was astonishing. He was a very special artist. Just imagine what kind of stage animal you needed to be with a classical guitar to hold the attention of the whole Royal Festival Hall with no amplification. That summarises his whole artistry. When you can do that you are a great artist.' It was no coincidence that *Asturias* was the opening track of Miloš's debut disc.

Miloš still listens to Segovia when researching repertoire: 'Ponce, Villa-Lobos and all these amazing composers he worked so closely with – those recordings are so representative of what those composers wanted to do with the pieces.' But, more generally, it is to a second guitarist that he turns – the Scottish-born, Spanish-based David Russell, who played a key role in Miloš's career. 'I played for David Russell in Italy when I was still undecided what I wanted to do with my career. He encouraged me

## 'IT'S ALMOST LIKE THE SOUND IS COMING FROM INSIDE YOU'







Opening up the classical guitar to new audiences: Miloš at an intimate club recital



Climbing Young Artist at the Gramophone Awards

to come to London and be a guitarist, and that helped me make the decision very early on to give it a shot. He was the first great guitarist I heard play live – and what luck! And when Miloš is putting a guitar CD in his player, it's most likely to be one of Russell's, 'because he is more than a guitarist'.

Following Russell's advice, Miloš did indeed come to London, to study at the Royal Academy. 'When I got to London,' he recalls, 'my teacher, Michael Lewin, saw there were a million and one things that just were not quite there. At one point I was playing tremolo with two fingers! But the thing is, even if I was, you could still hear three notes equally. I knew what sounds I wanted to create, and I never had to consciously think about how to do it, it was just there.' Over four years of study, his natural musicality gradually became allied to a honed technique – and the two combined 'creates who I am'.

But for all he learned at the Academy, Miloš also observed what he describes as 'a compartmentalising of departments: guitar being one thing, Early Music another, musical theatre another, opera another – everything was so sectionalised.' It was quite the opposite of the music-is-music approach with which he had grown up – and which he still aspires to uphold.

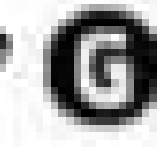
Which is why, last year, I found myself in a basement bar below Oxford Street, reached by a doorway sandwiched between shops. Miloš was headlining Limelight at the 100 Club, an initiative by his label Deutsche Grammophon to reach new and more youthful audiences. It's a far from perfect environment for an intimate instrument like a classical guitar, the till behind the bar pinging like an embarrassed cough in the Wigmore. But that isn't the point, of course: such initiatives are about taking a classical concert to a new environment, not turning that new environment into a classical concert. And Miloš was evidently just as much at home there as in a more traditional recital environment.

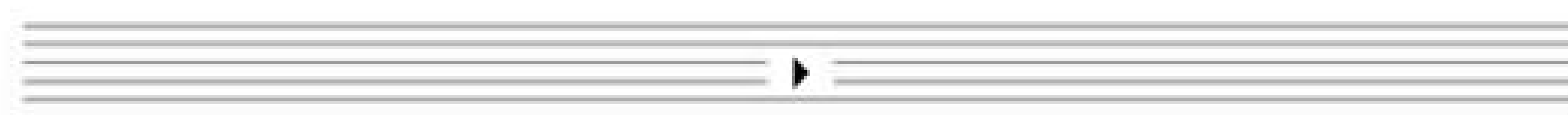
Whether in a basement bar or a high-profile hall, solo recitals certainly seem to be more on Miloš's agenda than concerto concerts. Reflecting on why, Miloš says: 'It's a great feeling to be in front of an orchestra. *Concierto de Aranjuez*, is a beautiful piece of music, *Fantasia para un gentilhombre* is a beautiful piece of music, Tedesco, Ponce, Villa-Lobos – then my counting doesn't stop, but it does get slower. I think that the guitar, because it's a quieter instrument than the violin or the piano, has not developed that area of the repertoire so successfully – but it doesn't mean it will not.' He hints at working with composers on new concertos,

though won't be drawn on who, simply saying: 'There are many things I am at the moment considering and working on.' Pushed again, he just says: 'I'll just say that in my life I always like challenge.'

Indeed, Miloš keeps his future plans closely guarded. He's also alluded – both on this occasion and last time we met – to plans for cross-genre projects, but won't mention specifics. He does, though, concede at one point: 'If I was asked to collaborate with the most respected classical composer, or Beyoncé, I would be equally excited. Because why not? Let's keep our world interesting and free, and see what happens, because unless we get out of our depth and out of the comfort zone I don't think we will get anywhere.'


Another obvious next project would be a disc of Baroque music. 'It's one of my biggest loves,' says Miloš. 'Bach is everything you can hope for. It's always been at the core of my artistic development, and I think you can play so many pieces by so many composers once you've started to play a fugue by Bach. Or a Chaconne, or a cello suite transcription – there are so many layers you need to discover and find, and you keep finding them, even if you play a piece for 10 years.'

So we'll just have to wait and see. But if artistic and sales success both point to a growing catalogue of Miloš releases, another important element is that he very clearly enjoys making records. 'I do, I do,' he says. 'It amplifies the senses. It's very exciting. Because in a concert you play for a 1000 people, let's say, and in a recording you play for the whole world. That red light is like the globe.' 



## MILOŠ ON DISC



Miloš Karadaglić  
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Miloš Karadaglić  
'Latino'  
DG © 479 0063 - released June 11  
Includes works by, among others Villa-Lobos, Piazzolla, Cardoso, Ponce and Barrios Mangoré





Francisco Tárrega (1852-1909): committed composer and recitalist, who popularised his own works and transcriptions, as well as the then new Torres guitar

PHOTOGRAPHY: PICTORIAL PRESS LTD/ALAMY, ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC, MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON/LEBRECHT, ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM, UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD, MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON/LEBRECHT, NIGEL OSBOURNE



# BRIDGING THE CENTURIES

From 16th-century Spanish courts to 21st-century concert halls, the guitar has evolved with its surroundings. William Yeoman traces the instrument's fascinating development

From its humble beginnings as 'an oversized ukulele', as Julian Bream once called the four-course Renaissance guitar, through to the modern six-string instrument that effectively conquered the wider musical world in the 20th century, it's fair to say the guitar has evolved well beyond its original form. And that poses a problem for today's classical performers: how to do justice to guitar music written for substantially different instruments, such as the Baroque guitar with its five gut courses (a course is a double string) and 're-entrant' tuning (where the courses aren't ordered from the lowest pitch to the highest)?

But, first, a potted history of the guitar's makers (or luthiers), music and players. *A Plaine and Easie Introduction to the Earlie Guitar*, if you will.

The four-course Renaissance guitar, which, in the 16th century, was enjoyed alongside the lute and, in Spain, the latter's courtly equivalent, the vaguely guitar-shaped vihuela, was quite small and had an ornate rose covering its soundhole and gut frets (there's an example by Belchior Diaz in the Royal College of Music, London – see illustration no 1).

The repertoire comprised fantasias, songs and dances; the composer-players included Guillaume Morlaye, Adrian Le Roy, Alonso Mudarra and Miguel de Fuenllana, the latter two more famous as vihuelists.

During the 17th century, the guitar gained a course and increased in size and ornateness, as well as popularity, especially in the courts of Louis XIV and Charles II. The Ashmolean has a fine example of a five-course Baroque guitar by Stradivari (see illustration no 3); other makers of the period included Matteo and Giorgio Sellas and René and Alexandre Voboam.

Technique developed rapidly under the supple fingers of such virtuoso composer-players as Francesco Corbetta, Gaspar Sanz, Santiago de Murcia and Robert de Visée, and embraced the so-called mixed style of strumming (*rasgueado*) and plucking (*punteado*). And the music of the period rings with the dances of the classic French suite – preludes, allemandes, sarabandes, chaconnes and so forth.

It was also during this period that the guitar began to be used as a continuo instrument in both small ensembles and orchestras, especially when accompanying ballets. Characteristic of the Baroque guitar was the effect known as *campanelas* (little bells), whereby notes were allowed to over-ring during fast passages. The

guitar lost its courses during the late-18th and early-19th centuries while gaining another string and developing a larger, figure-of-eight shape. This was the six-string guitar of the Viennese and Parisian salons, built by the likes of René François Lacôte, Louis Panormo (see illustration no 4) and Johann Georg Stauffer. It was as suitable for the delicate fingers of an amateur market as it was for the fiery effusions of such composer-performers as Fernando Sor, Dionysio Aguado, Mauro Giuliani, Luigi Legnani and even Paganini who, like Berlioz, was a devotee of the instrument. And the music itself ranged from études and anodyne dances through to operatic paraphrases and weighty sonatas.

Key among the guitar makers of the late Romantic period was Antonio de Torres Jurado (1817-92). In terms of bracing (the struts supporting the soundboard), the Torres guitar (see illustration no 5) used fan bracing (other makers generally favoured cross-bracing) that derived in part from Panormo's; it also had a larger body. The Torres is essentially today's classical guitar – although many luthiers still experiment with different forms of bracing (Paul Fischer's Taut system and Greg Smallman's lattice bracing supporting a much thinner soundboard come most readily to mind). Modern players can therefore choose from a variety of designs incorporating fan, lattice and cross-bracing systems, as well as non-traditional materials, composite soundboards and extra soundholes.

## RENAISSANCE TO RODRIGO...AND BEYOND

Through the years:  
how the Baroque  
guitar grew up

- 1 By Belchior Diaz, 1581, now owned by the Royal College of Music
- 2 A modern recreation of a Renaissance vihuela (Donald Warnock, 1964)
- 3 A five-course Stradivari held at the Ashmolean
- 4 An 1830 guitar by famed luthier Louis Panormo
- 5 A Torres 'Second Epoch' from 1888: recognisably today's instrument
- 6 Many top players prefer Greg Smallman's innovative bracing and super-thin soundboard





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William Carter: Fingertips or nails? 'It has to do with the instrument, not the music'

Among the composer-players of the late-19th and early-20th century period were Francisco Tárrega and his students Emilio Pujol and Miguel Llobet. They were the first fully to exploit the coloristic possibilities of the Torres guitar, especially in the upper register, and their compositions, which include studies, dances, arrangements from the piano repertoire, operatic paraphrases and folksong arrangements, have always been a part of the guitar repertoire.


Listeners have for some decades been able to hear what Corbetta, Sor or Tárrega might have sounded like, thanks to pioneering period guitarists such as the late James Tyler and Baroque and Romantic-period guitarists such as Hopkinson Smith, Nigel North, Jakob Lindberg,

## HOW DO YOU DO JUSTICE TO GUITAR MUSIC WRITTEN FOR DIFFERENT INSTRUMENTS?

Gordon Ferries, Rolf Lislevand, Izhar Elias, Paul O'Dette, Stephen Stubbs, Pavel Steidl, David Starobin and José Miguel Moreno.

So, back to that original question: how to do justice to guitar music written for substantially different instruments? The simplest solution is the most obvious but also the most compromised: adapt the music to suit the modern classical guitar. The other is more difficult but ultimately more satisfying: adapt the instrument to suit the music. In other words, build a modern copy of a historical instrument, based on surviving but often unplayable models, as well as on primary sources and the iconography of the period.

But then you also have to adapt your technique, your manner of phrasing, indeed your entire sound world to the music. Should you use right-hand nails or the flesh of the fingertips? Should you use all your fingers to pluck the strings or rest your pinky on the soundboard and only use your thumb and first two fingers? Should your left hand roam over the entire fretboard or favour as many open strings as possible?

It may sound complicated, but really it's just an extension of plain old interpretation, of honouring the composer and the score. As a result, as many guitarists finally 'catch' the historically informed practice (HIP) 'wave' into shore – whether through performances on modern instruments or the full monty on period instruments – the classical guitar connoisseur has never had it so good. Enthusiasts have access to a plethora of guitar makers and players, not least UK luthier Tony Johnson and period lute and guitar player William Carter (interviewed right), as they attempt to recreate the sound worlds of bygone eras. 

## PROMOTING PERIOD PLUCKING

William Carter's dedication to historical instruments has produced groundbreaking guitar and lute recordings

Does use of historical instruments and historically accurate techniques to play early music necessarily guarantee an authentic listening experience? Not a debate unique to guitarists, of course, but one worth discussing with a musician as dedicated to period performance as UK-based American lutenist and period guitarist William Carter.

'That's an interesting question, and after years of playing on old instruments as a practising "authentic" musician, the answers are less clear to me than many might think,' says Carter.

'I see a whole range of music which is more or less dependent on being played in a certain way, or on certain instruments in order to come to life. We might place Bach at one end of this spectrum. No intelligent listener can fail to enjoy a good performance of his keyboard music on a modern piano, for example; the music is just so strong.

'So is it fair, then, to say that other music such as Couperin's harpsichord works, which seem to need certain sonorities more, is weaker? Maybe not; Chopin or Debussy develop their ideas with great strength but seem to demand to be played on a piano.'

Talking about his decision to use the flesh of his fingertips – as most players did up until the late-19th century – and not nails, as most do today when performing early music, Carter says it has a lot to do with the nature of the instruments themselves rather than the music.

'From the 17th through the 19th centuries, not just in guitars but in other instruments as well, sounds become deeper and less immediate,'

he says. 'So the Baroque guitar "speaks" more quickly and doesn't sustain as much as early classical guitars, and then as the instrument increases in size this trend continues.

'This is one reason why plucking the strings with nails is more prevalent today; it's a more efficient way of getting energy into a larger instrument and it helps the higher overtones which are less prominent in bigger instruments. It seems to me that as instruments get larger they take more strength and as they get smaller they require more minute control – which you can get with the flesh.'

Tony Johnson, Carter's guitar maker who works in West Yorkshire, agrees. 'The early 19th-century guitars were generally smaller,' he says. 'The smaller the guitar the less there is to get moving, which means a quicker response. This is helpful if you're playing with the flesh of the fingertip, which doesn't produce the quicker, sharper sound you get naturally from fingernails.

'The light tension strings of the smaller Baroque guitar with its four pairs of gut strings and one single make it very bright-sounding and very suitable to be played with flesh. It's interesting how the move to single strings and the increase in the bass register meant makers had to rethink the construction. This led to many experiments with strutting, thickness of wood and so forth.'

And the actual sound? 'The flesh of the finger is softer than the nail and affects the sound accordingly,' he says. 'If I were to generalise, I would say that the flesh naturally makes a warmer sound and the nail a more brilliant one.'

## FOUR GUITAR RECORDINGS TO EXPLORE

 **'The American'**  
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Andrés Segovia *gtr*  
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 **'Le Calme'**  
William Carter *gtr*  
Linn (C) CKD380 (10/11)  
The contribution to guitar music by Fernando Sor, whose late works feature here, was immense. Carter plays on an authentic guitar.

 **Rodrigo:**  
**Concierto de Aranjuez**  
Julian Bream *gtr*  
Chamber Orchestra  
of Europe / John Eliot Gardiner  
RCA (S) 88697 71502-2 (7/83R)  
A classic recording of the most famous of all guitar concertos.

 **'Grandeur of the Baroque'**  
David Russell *gtr*  
Telarc (C) TEL33223-02  
The latest release from one of today's most prolific and profound players (see review on page 73).



# CHANGING THE COURSE OF GUITAR MUSIC

The 20th century was good for guitar, thanks to Segovia, Williams, Bream and others – but there is still work to do, writes Emma Baker

Long ago, during a guitar lesson at school, my teacher handed me some music by Giuliani. ‘This is the closest thing we guitarists have to Beethoven,’ he told me. It was, perhaps, an unfair comparison; I’d just discovered Beethoven and, fired with typical adolescent enthusiasm, my expectations soared. So I was disappointed to find myself reading what seemed to me conventional 19th-century noodlings. And I wondered – is this really the best we have?

With hindsight, I was too hard on Giuliani. This Italian-born virtuoso guitarist-composer did more than anyone at the time to raise the profile of his instrument, write new works, and revolutionise technique and the way guitar music was notated. He did in fact move in the same circles as Rossini and Beethoven, arranging the former’s music into operatic paraphrases, and playing cello in the premiere of the latter’s Seventh Symphony. Both composers admired Giuliani’s playing, so just imagine what might have been if they’d only seen fit to write something for him.

But neither did, and that highlights the guitar’s main weakness – a dearth of original repertoire by any really first-rate Classical and Romantic composers. Why was this? Perhaps because non-guitarist composers avoided writing for an instrument they couldn’t play, even if they liked its sound. So, despite the best efforts of composer-players such as Dionisio Aguado, Matteo Carcassi and Napoléon Coste, and the influential Fernando Sor, Giuliani’s Spanish counterpart, by the time this golden generation began to die out in the mid-19th century, the instrument had started to slip into obscurity. As the father of the modern guitar, Andrés Segovia, said much later: ‘The guitar was caught in kind of vicious circle: there were few guitarists because no music was being written for it, and no music was being written for it because there were so few guitarists.’

However, around the turn of 20th century there was a glimmer of hope, thanks to a new generation of guitarist-composers, the Spanish Francisco Tárrega, the Catalans Miguel Llobet and Emilio Pujol, and in the New World, the Paraguayan virtuoso Agustín Barrios. But the guitar needed a huge talent, someone to lift it out of folk music and into the concert hall, to persuade the most influential composers that it was an instrument worth writing for. That someone, of course, was Segovia.

Born in Andalucía, Segovia was influenced by Tárrega and Llobet but was mostly self-taught. He revised the modern guitar technique, which included playing using the fingernails. He advocated the use of nylon strings and worked with luthiers to strengthen the guitar’s structure so its



Segovia was a towering – if strongly Spanish-focused – champion of the guitar

small voice would carry in a concert hall. He also began to expand the repertoire, both borrowing music written for other instruments (such as Bach’s *Chaconne*) and approaching contemporary composers. Segovia’s superstar quality and sheer force of personality inspired a huge body of new music by Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Falla, Ponce, Tansman, Tórroba and Turina, to name just a few – music of varying quality, but remarkable in that there were more hits than misses.

One of Segovia’s most fruitful meetings was with Heitor Villa-Lobos in Paris in 1924. Villa-Lobos himself played the guitar and the two soon forged a professional and personal friendship. Segovia commissioned a study from the Brazilian composer – and he responded with a dozen. The 12 Etudes were completely original, influenced by Brazilian street music, Bach and Chopin, eminently suited to the guitar, and the first of many compositions that are now cornerstones of the repertoire.

Notably absent from this list of Segovia-inspired works, however, is perhaps the most famous, genre-defining one of all, Joaquín Rodrigo’s *Concierto de Aranjuez* (1939). It was actually dedicated to, and first performed by, another Spanish guitarist, Regino Sainz de la Maza, who helped Rodrigo (who didn’t play the guitar) to write in an idiomatic way. The myth that Segovia didn’t perform the premiere of *Aranjuez* because he considered it unplayable is untrue – he spent the war years in the US, and he and Rodrigo did not meet until 1947. However, this encounter happily resulted in another concerto, the *Fantasia para un gentilhombre*, as well as a great deal of solo guitar music. Rodrigo didn’t write exclusively for Segovia, though – he composed the *Invocación y Danza* for Segovia’s pupil Alirio Díaz and the four-guitar *Concierto Andalúz* for the Romero family. His final *Concierto para una fiesta* has an interesting provenance – it was commissioned in 1982 by a wealthy Texan couple, for Pepe Romero to play at their debutante daughters’ coming-out party.

While Segovia changed the course of the guitar’s fortunes, he had shaped the repertoire to his own musical tastes – tonal, neo-Romantic and strongly Spanish. Things might have continued along this popular but highly specific path had it not been for the appearance of two exceptional talents, born less than 10 years apart, and neither from Spain. The younger of the two, John Williams, came from Australia; his father, Len, a jazz guitarist, brought John to Europe to study with Segovia. Williams, however, struck out on his own, absorbing all musical styles and cultures from prog-rock to Latin-American to African. He’s best known for his solo and collaborative projects but has been the inspiration





Xuefei Yang: 'All my Royal Academy classmates were violinists. I felt like I was in a sea of music, but none of it was for the guitar'

Julian Bream: a tireless guitar advocate

for a great deal of new repertoire – music by Stephen Dodgson and concertos by André Previn, Peter Sculthorpe and Toru Takemitsu.

But perhaps just as significant as Segovia for the creation of new repertoire was London-born Julian Bream. A huge percentage of 20th-century guitar music emerged from his evangelising of the instrument to the British musical establishment – efforts that produced sonatas and concertos by Hans Werner Henze, Lennox Berkeley and Malcolm Arnold, William Walton's *Five Bagatelles* and Tippett's *The Blue Guitar*. It all gave the guitar a voice entirely different from the Spanish repertoire. Thanks to Bream's advocacy of the lute he was also able to accompany Peter Pears and so met Benjamin Britten, who wrote the cycle *Songs from the Chinese* for tenor and guitar as a test piece for something more substantial. In 1963, Britten produced that masterpiece of 20th-century guitar repertoire *Nocturnal after John Dowland*. Interestingly, Britten had wanted to write a major solo work for the lute, and it took all Bream's tact and charm to steer him towards the guitar.

Bream's persuasive powers stopped short at Stravinsky, however. A TV crew captured their encounter in 1965 – Bream plays the lute and asks Stravinsky if he will write for him, and the grand old composer, preoccupied, mutters words to the effect that everyone wants a piece of him and there is simply no time. Perhaps if the meeting had been engineered on another day, who knows what might have been?

Bream and Williams were closely followed by a fresh group of American artists including Eliot Fisk and Sharon Isbin, as well as David Starobin, who has commissioned an impressively large body of work that includes Berio's *Sequenza XI* for solo guitar. There has been a wave of composers who play the guitar, too – such as Moscow-born Nikita Koshkin, who wrote the wonderfully theatrical showpieces *Princes' Toys* and *Usber-Waltz*, and the great Cuban composer and guitarist Leo Brouwer, himself a pupil of Emilio Pujol.

One of the most notable virtuosos of recent times is Xuefei Yang, a product of the great classical music chain reaction taking place in China. She possesses that typical guitarist's pioneering spirit – the only guitarist in her neighbourhood, she studied at the Beijing Academy before coming


to London, where she now lives. 'It was fate – the guitar chose me,' she says, 'but I think the guitar suits the Chinese temperament – it's a plucked instrument that originally came from Asia. And, as you know the classical music movement is growing very fast in China and the potential for the guitar is huge. It's portable, polyphonic and perfect for music-making in a small flat – not everyone can have a piano.'

How does she feel about the repertoire she has inherited? 'I'm grateful for what Segovia did and that we as guitarists are enjoying it. But there's still not enough and I'd like to continue along the road of masters past. When I first came to the Royal Academy all my classmates were violinists. I felt like I was in a sea of music but none of it was for the guitar. They didn't know how lucky they were.'

Yang's attitude to commissioning is to encourage it as much as possible:

'We have to keep striving. It might take a composer a few tries to get the hang of writing for the guitar, or we might commission 10 works, only one of which is a great one – but we have to keep doing it. Time has always filtered out the exceptional from the merely good, but not all of what you play has to be world-beating. The guitar is suited to miniatures and when I'm planning a concert I think in terms of starter, main course and dessert – you don't want main courses all the time.'

So far Yang has had several works by both guitarists and non-guitarists written for her, including classical Chinese composers, and Britons Timothy Salter and Stephen Goss. 'Stephen knows the instrument well and writes in a way that suits my playing. I like that he's also interested in Chinese culture.'

What would be her ideal commission? 'I'd love to have some music written by major Chinese composers. It's difficult, though, because the guitar is still a novelty in China – some people are still surprisingly ignorant about it. Also, the big names are quite expensive, so I would have to find sponsors. But I really believe the guitar deserves a better reputation and more good players, and I hope that I can help encourage that by being a role model and by showing just what is possible.' 

## I'M GRATEFUL FOR WHAT SEGOVIA DID...BUT THERE'S STILL NOT ENOUGH REPERTOIRE'







# FROM BOW *TO BATON*

The skills of an accomplished soloist don't always transfer to the podium. But, writes **Charlotte Smith**, for those who are compelled to wield the baton, the results can be exceptional

ILLUSTRATION BY PRINCE HAT

**T**he conductor is the symphony orchestra's most visible personality. Standing alone on the podium, it is his artistic voice which, through the flick of a baton, is brought to life by the massed playing forces – every one of whom must demonstrate outstanding musicianship in his own right. It is little wonder, then, that this peculiar dichotomy – by some standards a creative dictatorship, by others a communal partnership – has produced some of the world's most celebrated or notorious musical figures. But what makes a first-rate conductor? And does a background in professional instrumental performance help? The role's great paradox is that the conductor's movements encompass, but cannot directly create, the sound. Yet a number of outstanding conductors, from Daniel Barenboim to Vladimir Ashkenazy, began their musical lives as performers, producing instrumental sounds of the highest calibre. Whether the performer will be able to transfer his skills to conducting effectively is difficult to predict and ultimately must come down to a mixture of personality, reputation, technique and, most importantly, a meaningful and original voice.

The lure of the podium is clear: conducting represents the opportunity to put one's creative stamp on a massed orchestral sound and to have at one's disposal the great variety of instrumental timbres. For conductor Ashkenazy, known the world over as a brilliant pianist, the sound of the orchestra was, in fact, his first musical love. 'Orchestral music was for me incomparable to anything else in the world,' he says. 'As a child I was overwhelmed by the sound of the symphony orchestra. Later, when I travelled to the West I brought suitcases full of orchestral LPs back to the USSR, where there was very little available. The piano is, of course, a wonderful instrument, but a symphony orchestra is something else.' Although Ashkenazy never aspired to conduct in his early life, his passion for the sound of the

orchestra is common to a number of performers-turned-conductors and in hindsight was enormously influential on his path to the podium. Violinist and Northern Sinfonia principal conductor Thomas Zehetmair speaks of 'exploring the colours and possibilities of the different instruments' and Rostropovich Cello Competition winner and rising conductor Han-Na Chang describes the orchestra as producing 'the most miraculous and powerful sounds imaginable'. For high-profile soloists, who must often live a relatively solitary musical life, the prospect of interacting with this 'vibrant and alive micro society' and 'playing' a collective instrument with all its 'give and take' is a large part of the appeal, she says.

Another draw is the enormous range of orchestral repertoire available. For both Chang and violinist and Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra conductor Nikolaj Znaider, the limited number of works available for their solo instruments cannot compare with the variety and scope of orchestral music. 'Conducting for me is all about the music,' says Znaider. 'I am constantly broadening my horizons and getting to know more and more music. For this reason the desire to conduct is something I cannot ignore.' Chang agrees: 'I started performing professionally when I was 11 years old and because I was so young and the solo cello repertoire so small, I think turning to conducting was a subconscious way of preventing myself from being over-confident.'

But is there not an element of wanting to take control? Particularly for those conductors who have started their lives as orchestral players, the desire to give direction rather than accept another's interpretation must surely play some role in taking up the baton. Dublin Philharmonic music director Derek Gleeson began his musical life as a percussionist, first in the European Union Youth Orchestra and later as a freelance player in many of London's top orchestras. 'I couldn't see myself playing percussion in an orchestra for the rest of my





Pianist and conductor Vladimir Ashkenazy successfully balances parallel careers

Cellist Han-Na Chang is drawn to the great variety of orchestral repertoire

life,' he says. 'I had the most incredible experience playing under the world's best conductors in the EUYO. But the life of a freelance percussion player couldn't live up to this. I was frustrated by playing under conductors and thinking, "Actually I would do this differently".'

For cellist and English Chamber Orchestra music director Paul Watkins, the issue of control was less clear-cut. Having spent nearly eight years as the BBC Symphony Orchestra's principal cellist, he found himself in the privileged position of observing and collaborating with some of the greatest conducting names. Earlier, as a teenager at the Menuhin School, he was encouraged to concentrate on the democratic discipline of chamber performance, learning from his colleagues and exchanging ideas. While such high-class music making may have been rewarding enough for any number of talented performers, for Watkins, the need for greater accountability was an underlying issue. 'I think a little part of me wanted to rebel against that, to really be responsible for the whole shape of a piece,' he says. 'This is not to say I try to be in any way dictatorial as a conductor now, but there was definitely a desire to experience the other side of the coin.'

Despite being known as a cellist throughout his early professional life, Watkins's interest in conducting began at an early stage. At 17, while still at the Menuhin School, he began to conduct small groups, 'experimenting waving my arms around'. Likewise, for former oboist and period conductor Paul Goodwin, a fascination for conducting took hold while at university. But because Goodwin 'could see an exciting path in the development of the historical oboe world', it would take another 16 years for him to take up conducting full-time. What prevented both Watkins and Goodwin from conducting seriously initially was not simply a clear alternative path as an instrumentalist, but also the need to develop a fully formed artistic perspective. 'I always felt that going

*'IF YOU CAN CONNECT WITH EACH MUSICIAN AS YOU DO WITH YOUR OWN INSTRUMENT, IT'S MIRACULOUS'*

– Han-Na Chang

into conducting early would, for me, be a technical exercise,' says Goodwin. 'When I did go into it later, I felt very strongly that I had a voice and there was something I wanted to say. There was now a reason for doing it philosophically.'

Ashkenazy, too, was drawn into conducting through his interpretative ideas. At the outset of his conducting career, and with little technical experience, he led two Philharmonia concerts at the Royal Festival Hall. After the second performance he took some orchestral players aside, saying, 'Tell me honestly, it's impossible to play with me isn't it?' To his surprise, the players urged him to continue conducting. 'We know you are just beginning to explore this role,' they said, 'but what you express is worthwhile, so please come back and conduct us again.'

A strong artistic vision is perhaps the most important explanation for why some performers feel motivated to move to the podium, while other highly talented artists are happy to remain in their instrumental sphere. And for those who do make the transition, their experience as orchestral performers and as soloists can prove invaluable. Such individuals are in the unique position of having experienced exactly what constitutes effective conducting from a player's perspective and also what it takes as a performer to make a given sound – witness, for example, the success of Dallas Symphony chief Jaap Van Sweden and the BBC Symphony Orchestra's newly appointed principal Sakari Oramo, who began their musical lives as concertmasters of the Royal Concertgebouw and Finnish Radio Symphony respectively. 'A conductor

Former oboist Paul Goodwin was drawn to conducting from an early age





who has played in an orchestra knows how to breathe,' says Gleeson. 'A lot of phrasing is about breathing with the players. One of the biggest myths of conducting is that it's about the beat – it's actually about what happens before that.'

Chang agrees: 'It's so important that I know firsthand what kind of sounds can be made. As an instrumentalist, once you reach a certain standard, somehow your mind hears the sound, your heart wants it and your hands make it. If you can achieve that as a conductor – connecting with each of the 100 musicians as you do with your own instrument – that is truly miraculous.' Thomas Zehetmair goes further, describing a 'similar interpretative attitude' between the roles of violin soloist and conductor. 'There are even technical similarities regarding economy of motions,' he says.

So the ability to create sounds firsthand is important. But do some instruments lend themselves to making the step better than others? Certainly the number of string-playing and pianist conductors do seem to outweigh those from other disciplines and there are obvious explanations for this – the pianist is accustomed to having the full sonority of a work at his fingertips, while the string player has an intimate understanding of the great bulk of an orchestra. 'It is more unusual for a wind player to take up conducting,' concedes Goodwin. 'Most of the performing conductors I played under as an oboist were singers, keyboard players or violinists. Yet to me the oboe is the soul of the orchestra and an oboist conductor can therefore bring line, colour breadth and heart to his role.' However, playing beneath performers from other disciplines is never a bad thing, he says. 'I find it fascinating working underneath string players as you gain an insight into the mechanics of their instrument. And playing underneath singers is always a pleasure as they place great emphasis on breathing.'

Perhaps, then, the more pertinent issue is not so much which instrumental perspective a conductor brings to the podium, but whether he possesses the means to express this. 'It is a great advantage if a conductor knows what it feels like to actually work a phrase, as long as he has the ability to articulate that knowledge,' says Znaider. The violinist stresses that he has always understood conducting to be a specific craft in its own right, a view shared by Paul Watkins: 'I was very determined when I became a professional conductor not to be another instrumentalist who conducts through sheer force of will, who expects respect from the musicians because he has a body of work behind him,' he says. 'I wanted to really understand the skill and craft of conducting.' Goodwin agrees: 'In the early instrument world one is more interested in ideas, thoughts, gestures and philosophy, but as a conductor I spent a lot of time making sure I had a good modern technique, because ideas and passion alone are not enough in a modern orchestral setting.'

There are always exceptions to any rule, of course. Watkins cites Yehudi Menuhin and Mstislav Rostropovich as examples of legendary performers whose conducting techniques left much to be desired,

yet who produced the most wonderful performances through great musicality and that magic ingredient – charisma. 'I worked very closely with Yehudi Menuhin when I was a child and he was an incredibly inspiring figure, despite the fact he could give people seven different heart attacks during a performance!' Watkins says. 'He was so vague in terms of gesture and precision, but at the same time an incredibly deep-thinking and wide-ranging musician, who was capable of coming up with unique and special suggestions for colour and tempi.'

Artists like Menuhin demonstrate that the ability to command and captivate an orchestra is at least as important as technical skill – and in these progressive times understanding player psychology is a hugely significant part of this. 'The old days of the totalitarian conductor are long gone,' says Gleeson. 'The conductor needs to demonstrate a certain type of dynamism and people need to want to play under you.' Equally, says Znaider, a conductor must never forget that it is the 'generosity and willingness to share' of the orchestral musicians that enables him to stand on the podium and direct.

To have sat among the musicians as a performer and understood from a personal perspective the needs and concerns of an instrumentalist must surely help a conductor to understand the psychology of a modern orchestra. Yet the transition from performer to the podium is for some a difficult experience, involving scepticism from colleagues and the wider musical community. Gleeson describes the initial cynicism he encountered upon first turning his hand to the baton, a mentality among the players of 'he thinks he knows more than me'. Certainly, for this article several former performers refused to be interviewed, believing it would dredge up old attitudes they have since shrugged off. Goodwin describes some early resistance from English musicians because he had 'changed sides' and Znaider describes the prejudice of being labelled 'not a real conductor', although he emphasises he has never experienced this feeling from the musicians themselves. Whether such attitudes stem from jealousy or a sense of betrayal is unclear, but the lack of label for a multi-tasking musician may also be a contributing factor.

Indeed the need to balance multiple musical fields, especially at a top professional level, is a difficulty faced by all performing conductors. Some, like Goodwin and Gleeson, solve the dilemma by relinquishing an instrumentalist's life entirely. Others must find ways for each role to enrich the other. 'I do not intend to stop playing,' says Znaider. 'I prefer to think of it not as a shift, but as a parallel endeavour.'

And perhaps this is the key. Clearly not every great performer can become a great conductor, but for those exceptional musicians who do, their musical lives away from the podium – be they past or parallel – can only enhance the knowledge and insight brought to the conducting sphere. What constitutes great conducting is as varied and individual as the range of personalities and philosophies behind the baton, but an understanding of the performance experience must always be a good thing. **6**

## FIVE SINGING CONDUCTORS



More often than not, conductors are instrumentalists. Yet singers can prove particularly successful on the podium; as Paul Goodwin says in these pages, 'Playing underneath singers is always a pleasure as they place great emphasis on breathing'. Here are five at the top of their game; visit our forum at [gramophone.co.uk](http://gramophone.co.uk) to suggest more.

**1 Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau** took up conducting in the early 1960s, prompting the great retort from Otto Klemperer when invited to hear him conduct a Schubert symphony: 'I afraid I can't, I'm at Solti's *Winterreise*.' But Fischer-Dieskau recorded from time to time, and proved a good accompanist when his wife Júlia Varady made her recital discs for Orfeo.

**2 Peter Schreier** won a *Gramophone* Award for his Philips disc of the Mozart Requiem, one of his first discs as a conductor. He has generally confined himself to vocal music and is a stylish leader from the podium.

**3 José Cura's** conducting while he sang opera arias may have caused more than a few titters, but he made a couple of pretty decent discs, including a virile and heartfelt Rachmaninov Second Symphony.

**4 René Jacobs** made the jump from countertenor to one of the most electrifying conductors around of Baroque and Classical fare and has given us a superb series of recordings for Harmonia Mundi (including a Recording of the Year for his *Marriage of Figaro*).

**5 Plácido Domingo** is almost as often encountered in the pit as on stage these days, a luxury accompanist in his 'own' repertoire and a stylish conductor of opera, with a modest discography of such projects to his name.



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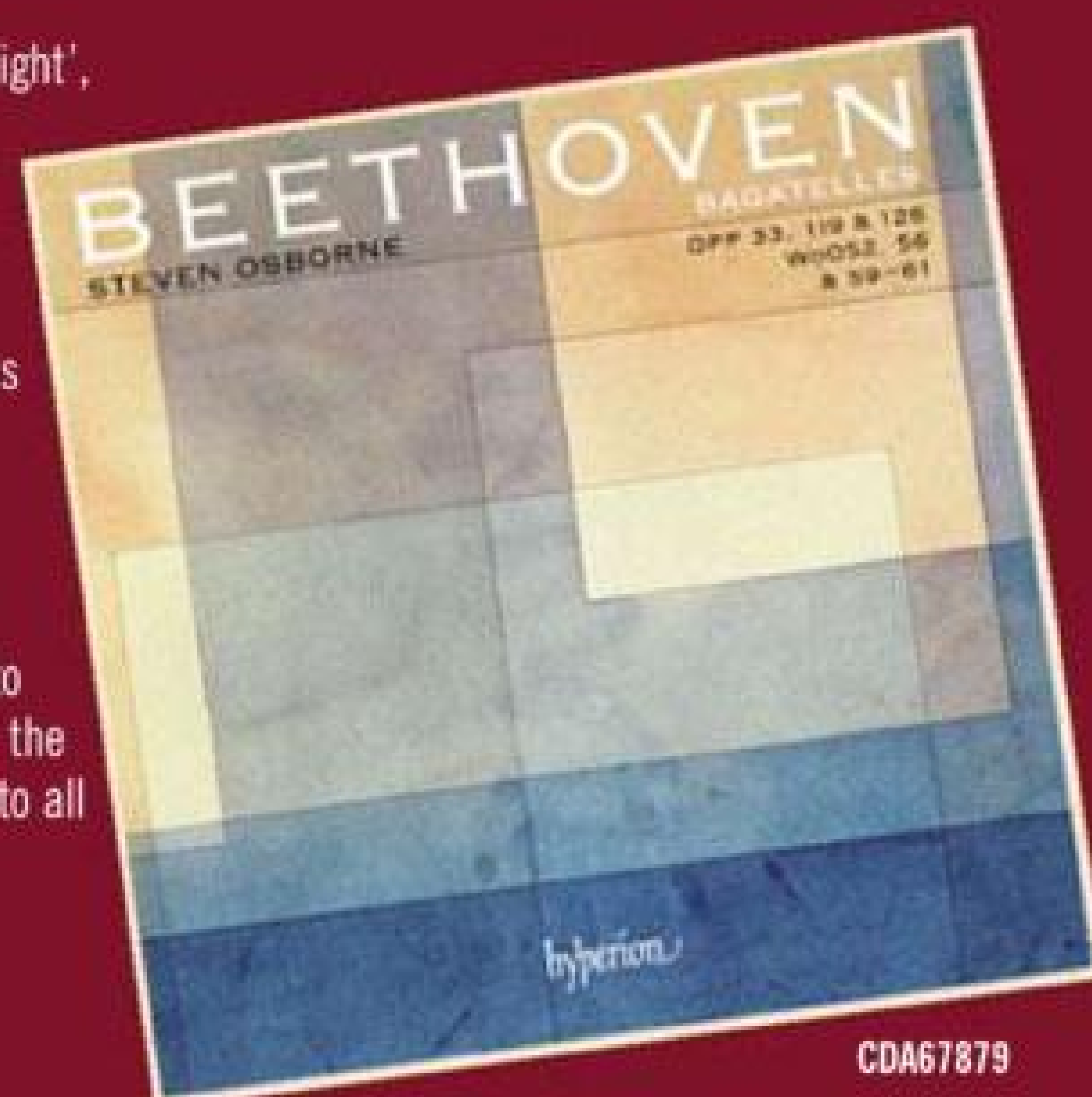
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### LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

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Following his acclaimed Beethoven 'Moonlight', 'Pathétique' and 'Waldstein' Sonatas release, Gramophone-award-winning pianist Steven Osborne lends his remarkable artistry to Beethoven's complete Bagatelles. These 30 short pieces span the composer's whole creative life, and range from the Op 126 set, the last works that Beethoven ever wrote for the piano which at times occupy the rarefied spiritual world of the late string quartets, to his most famous stand-alone piano piece, the mysterious little A minor Bagatelle known to all the world as 'Für Elise'.

**STEVEN OSBORNE piano**



CDA67879



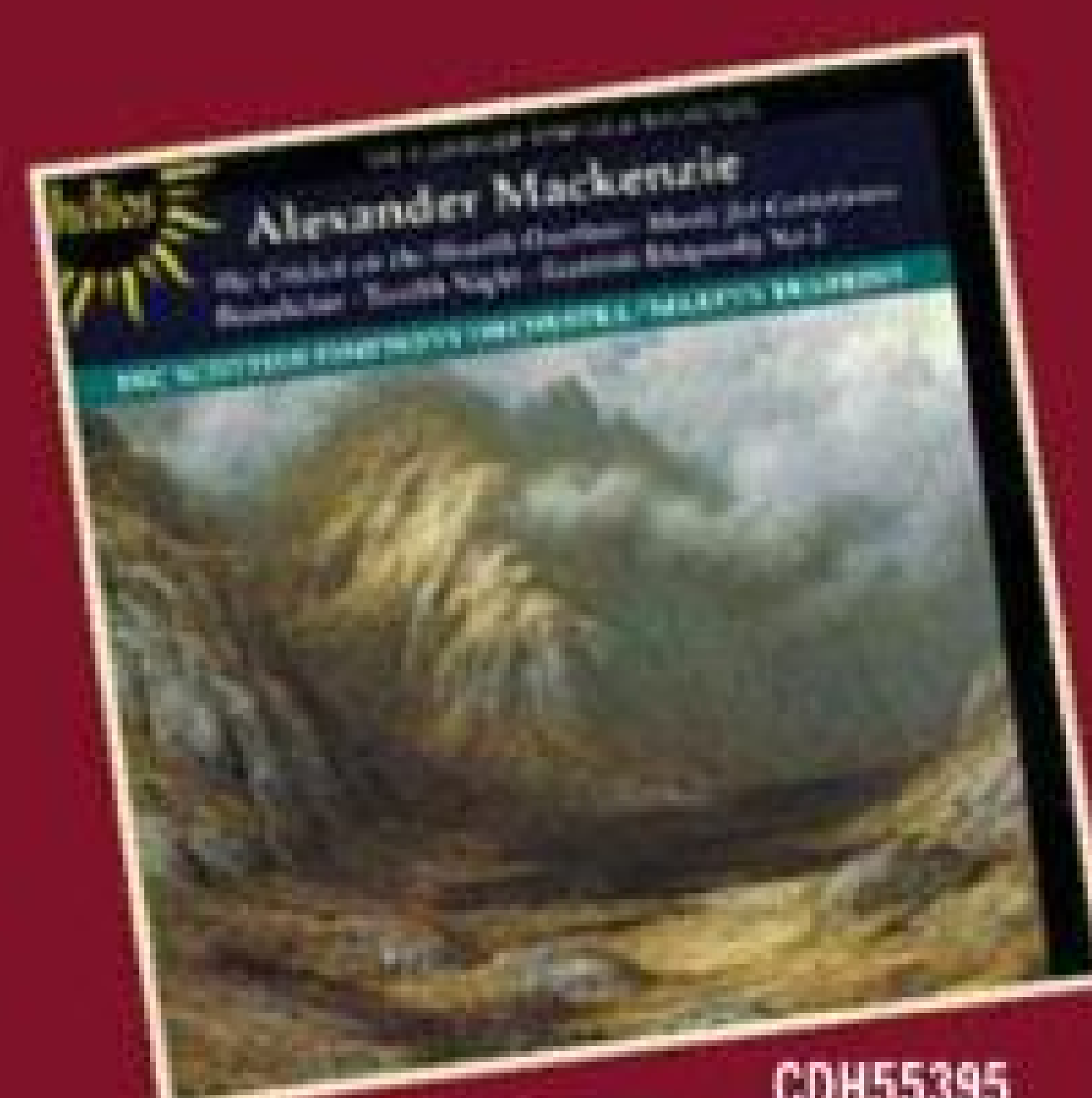
### SIR ALEXANDER MACKENZIE

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This selection of colourful orchestral showpieces by Scottish composer Sir Alexander Mackenzie revived an unfairly neglected composer's profile; this timely reissue is bound to introduce a whole new generation to his music. The BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and Martyn Brabbins are on top form in such delights as 'The Cricket on the Hearth' Overture, and the soaringly lovely Benedictus.

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'The King's Consort, clearly inspired by the genius of James Bowman, is musically at its very best' (*CDReview*)

**JAMES BOWMAN countertenor**  
**THE KING'S CONSORT**  
**ROBERT KING conductor**



CDH55370  
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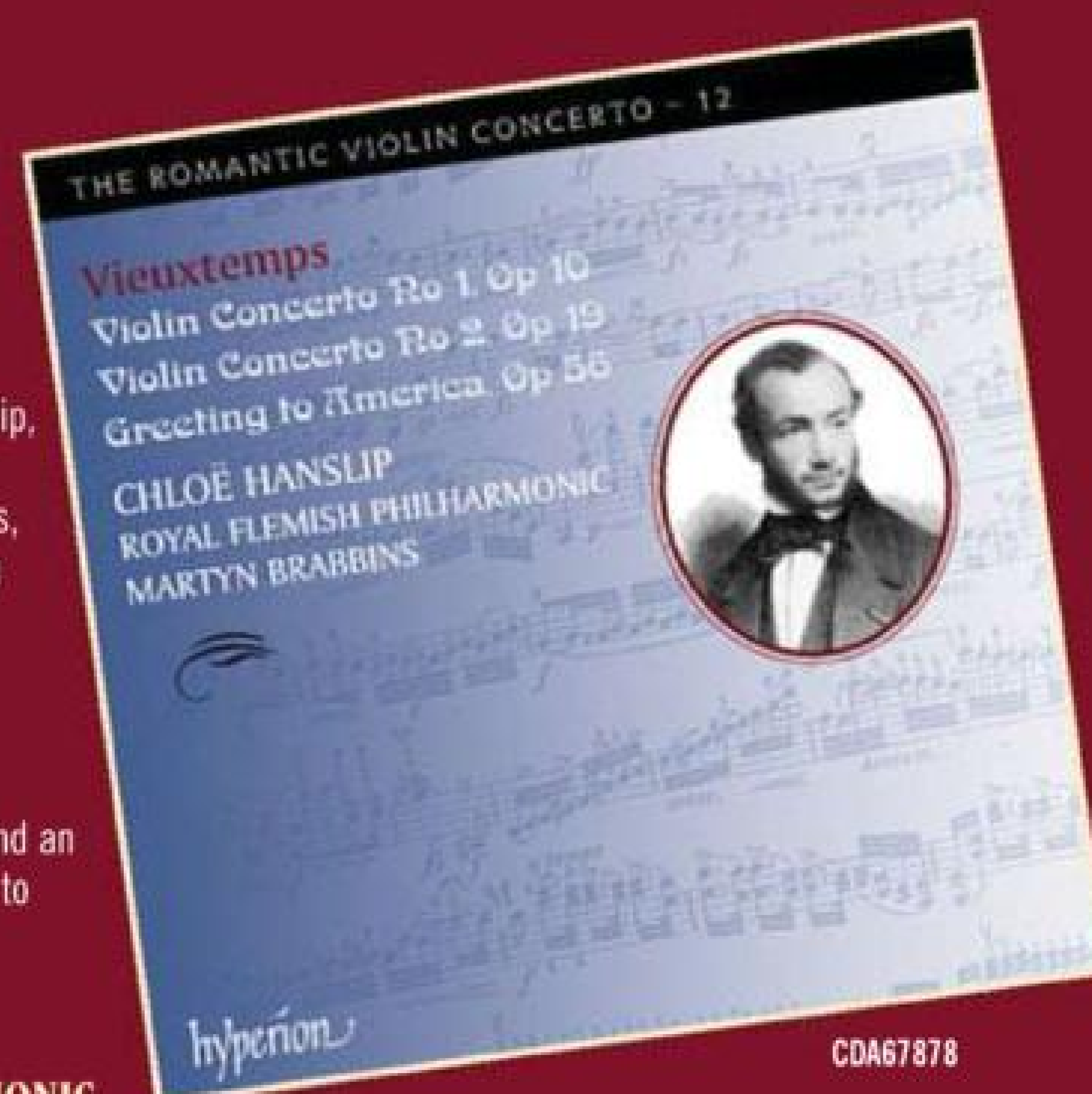
### THE ROMANTIC VIOLIN CONCERTO – 12

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**CHLOË HANSLIP violin**  
**ROYAL FLEMISH PHILHARMONIC**  
**MARTYN BRABBINS conductor**



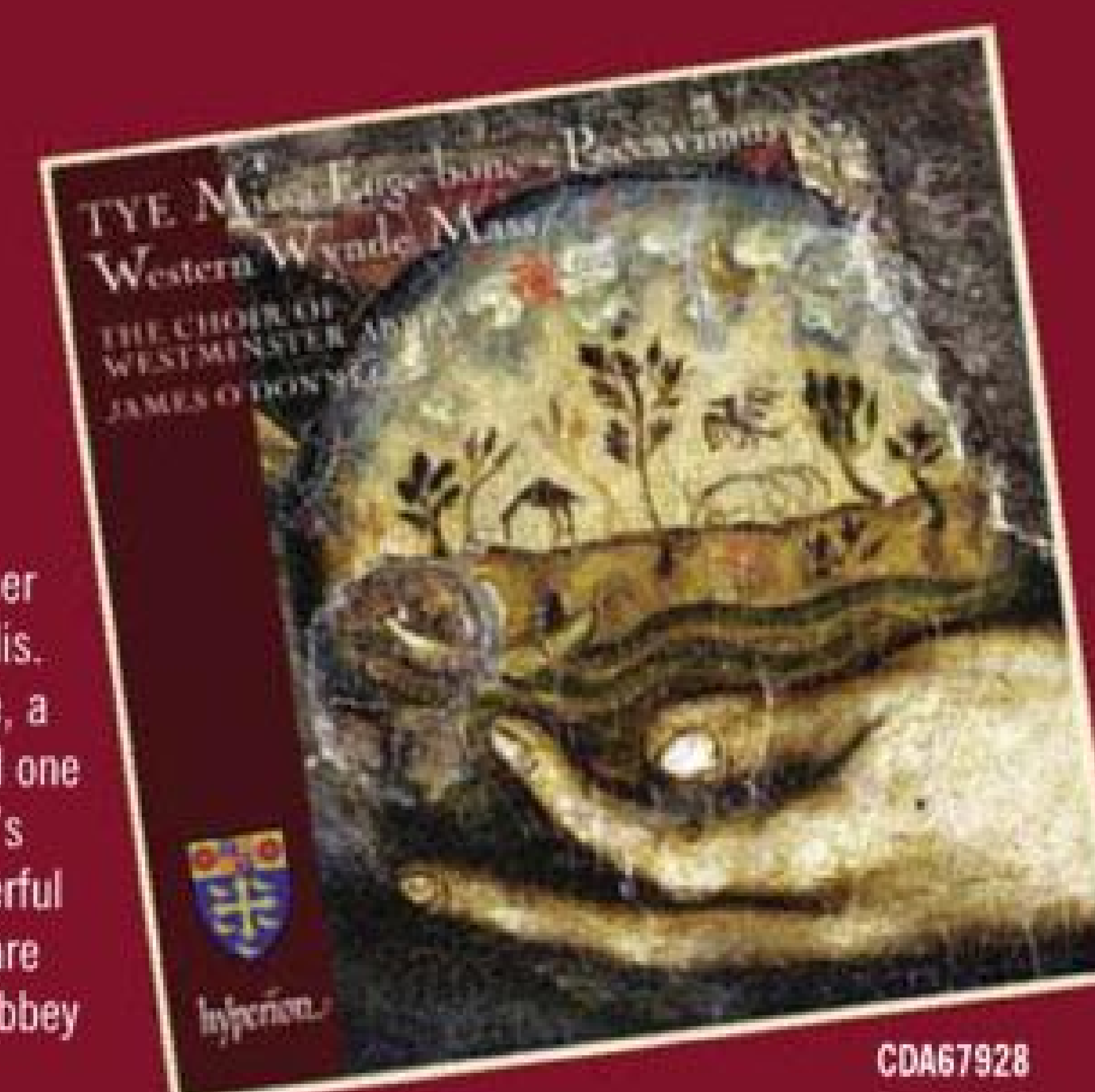
CDA67878

### CHRISTOPHER TYE

#### Missa Euge bone & Western Wynde Mass

Individual, unpredictable and startlingly beautiful—this is the sound-world of 16th-century English composer Christopher Tye, a direct contemporary of Thomas Tallis. Henry VIII was an admirer of Tye's sparse, a cappella choral works, asserting 'England one god, one truth, one doctor hath for music's art—and that is Dr Tye'. Here, the masterful *Euge bone* and *Western Wynde* Masses are performed by the peerless Westminster Abbey Choir, directed by James O'Donnell.

**WESTMINSTER ABBEY CHOIR**  
**JAMES O'DONNELL conductor**



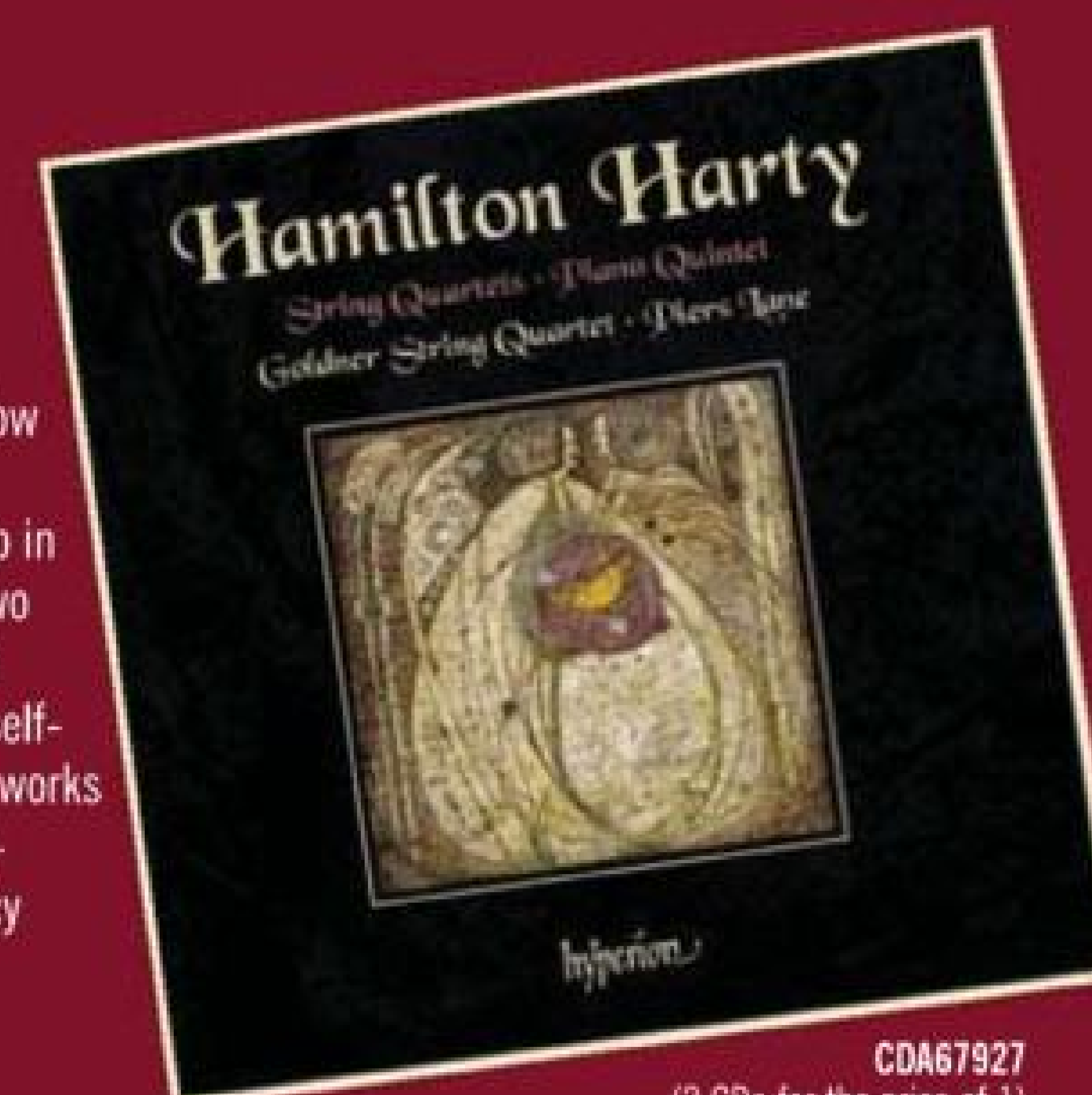
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# GRAMOPHONE *Reviews*

June 2012



The Valentin Berlinsky Quartet play Beethoven and Shostakovich ► [REVIEW ON PAGE 56](#)

## KEY TO SYMBOLS

- G** **Gramophone Choice**  
We name our best 12 recordings reviewed in each issue
  - C** **Critic's Choice**  
Awarded by a reviewer who has heard a truly outstanding recording
  - G** **Gramophone Player**  
Hear a high-quality sample of the music online
  - R** Reissue
  - H** Historic
  - ②** Compact disc (number of discs in set)
  - T** Text(s) included
  - t** translation(s) included
  - S** Synopsis included
  - s** subtitles included
  - SACD** Super Audio CD (SACD)
  - DVD** DVD audio
  - DVD** DVD video
  - Blu-ray** Blu-ray
  - D** Download only
  - nla** no longer available
  - aas** all available separately
  - oas** only available separately
  - £** £11 and over
  - £8** £8 to £10.99
  - £6** £6 to £7.99
  - £5** £5.99 and below
- (In box-sets, price is per disc)

## GRAMOPHONE *Reviewers*



Mike Ashman

At school I spent much of my spare time with cricketers. They weren't supposed to like music – so I did and joined the choir. Because of that I got to sing Howells in good cathedrals and listen to Beecham and Boult (and The Beatles) on various illegally stored gramophones of the kind recommended in Edward Greenfield's first bargain record guide (a great influence when I read it cover-to-cover on a tramp steamer coming back from Lisbon). From the music department's eccentric collection of scratched Ace of Clubs records I learned that Beethoven wrote three symphonies (No 3 – Kleiber, No 6 – Kleiber with different orchestra, No 9 – Ansermet with frightening

last movement) and Brahms one (van Beinum, ferocious basses, bit weird). That, and my mother's accounts of Beecham's first concert with the LPO and her fear of opera (which naturally encouraged me), led to hours of taped Bayreuth Wagner through the night.

Deciding that my passion for theatre was better inflicted on performers than on a public watching me, I started to direct, moving in illogical, lucky steps from London fringe to assisting at Welsh National Opera. Still listening, and writing where possible, I continue addictions to Beecham, Boult and Kleiber (and The Beatles and cricket) but have rather lost Ansermet and Howells under a river of old Wagner.

- |                    |                       |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Andrew Achenbach   | Ivan March            |
| Nalen Anthoni      | Ivan Moody            |
| <b>Mike Ashman</b> | Bryce Morrison        |
| Philip Clark       | Jeremy Nicholas       |
| Rob Cowan*         | Christopher Nickol    |
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| Jeremy Dibble      | Richard Osborne       |
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| David Fanning      | Edward Seckerson      |
| Iain Fenlon        | Pwyll ap Siôn         |
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| Philip Kennicott   | Arnold Whittall       |
| Tess Knighton      | Richard Wigmore       |
| Andrew Lamb        | William Yeoman        |
| Richard Lawrence   | * Contributing Editor |



# Recording of the Month



*'In his hands, the music is like a living thing; one senses that each performance will have its own individual character'*

## *Duncan Druce is impressed by a young violinist's debut concerto recording*

### **Mendelssohn • Tchaikovsky**

**Mendelssohn** Violin Concerto, Op 64

**Tchaikovsky** Violin Concerto, Op 35

**Ray Chen** *vn*

**Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra / Daniel Harding**

Sony Classical © 88697 98410-2 (63' • DDD)

Ray Chen, *Gramophone's* One to Watch in February 2011, played these concertos at the Menuhin Competition in 2008 (Mendelssohn) and the Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels in 2009 (Tchaikovsky). It's easy to appreciate why he won first prize on both occasions. Magnificent technique, of course; the trickiest passages seem like child's play to him. But what impresses most is Chen's musicianship – he's able to make the listener aware of the emotional import of each phrase, apparently spontaneously, as though he's only just considered playing it that way. Take the way he plays the two principal themes in the first movement of the Tchaikovsky. Both recur several times, with different continuations, and on each occasion Chen is able to find a new tone colour, a different touch of subtle *rubato*. In his hands, the music is like a living thing; one senses that each performance will have its own individual character. In the finale of this concerto, he values musical character over sheer brilliance,

showing a strong feeling for the drama of the solo introduction, phrasing the rondo theme in the most lively way and, later on, capturing the full character of the folk-inspired episodes while avoiding any grotesque exaggeration. Similarly, in the finale of the Mendelssohn, he embraces the music's playfulness, its occasional moments of lyricism and the times when attack is needed. In the middle of the movement, when the orchestra takes the main theme, he's happy to retire from the foreground and play a decorative role.

Chen also shows an impressive command of the larger musical paragraphs, as in the long melody that makes up the first part of the Mendelssohn's *Andante*. In the preceding *Allegro* his command of the expressive arc of the lyrical second theme is just as enthralling, even though here he has to collaborate with the woodwind players, who share the melody.

In this passage, too, Chen introduces a number of the sort of *portamentos* that the work's dedicatee, Ferdinand David, would have used to heighten the expressive effect. He does so discreetly and tastefully, and, I think, makes a strong case for the need to connect notes in this way, if the touching quality of the melody is to be fully brought out. Daniel Harding and his Swedish

orchestra give magnificent support and the balance, while sounding entirely natural in its perspective, allows all the important solo lines to make their mark. A combination of fine playing and well-defined recording allows the varied timbres of the woodwind, horns and trumpets to make a particularly vivid impact. One is reminded more forcefully than usual that both concertos are the work of masters of orchestration; Mendelssohn and Tchaikovsky delight in finding colourful and evocative settings for the soloist and a variety of ways of animating the musical dialogue. The overall sound is rich and well balanced, and there's an infectious air of enthusiasm and commitment.

In the Mendelssohn, after Chen has completed his first short solo with two splendidly bold virtuoso flourishes, the full orchestra enters with inspiring enthusiasm, fully endorsing the composer's *Allegro molto appassionato*. And the big central *tutti* in the Tchaikovsky's first movement, where the lyrical main theme is transformed into a triumphal march, and which sometimes sounds disturbingly brash, emerges here as a natural culmination as the violins play with full-blooded romantic feeling. The balance between strings and wind, too, has been perfectly judged. Harding's pacing





Exquisite shading: in the Tchaikovsky, Ray Chen finds a different tone colour as each theme returns



Mendelssohn: his concerto is warmly conveyed by Chen

of each movement is spot on – the two opening *allegros*, in particular, have a powerful cumulative vitality. As both these movements near their end, a staged increase in speed is indicated and here the collaboration between soloist and orchestra is exemplary, maintaining and gradually intensifying the momentum.

At this stage in his career, Ray Chen doesn't offer the kind of interpretation that challenges traditional ways of playing the music. In the Tchaikovsky, for instance, though generally adhering to the composer's text, he makes use of several of the familiar little embellishments, octave transpositions

and variations that generations of violinists have liked to add. By contrast, James Ehnes's recent recording, immaculately played and powerfully expressive, demonstrates how it's quite unnecessary to change anything Tchaikovsky wrote. I'm happy, however, to trade textural purity for Chen's delightful air of spontaneity, especially considering that Ehnes's accompaniment (Ashkenazy and the Sydney Symphony) isn't quite in the same league as Harding's. Similarly, in the Mendelssohn, Christian Tetzlaff's swift, light account is extremely persuasive, especially in the finale, and he demonstrates how effective the first-movement cadenza can be while still following exactly the composer's markings – particularly the tempo indications. Chen, at this point, is content to follow the traditional modifications of tempo that are not shown in the score (though he does play all the high harmonics that Mendelssohn surely intended). But in this concerto, too, Chen's warmly communicative manner is something to be treasured over interpretative correctness. All in all, a most impressive release. **G**

*Mendelssohn* – selected comparison:

Tetzlaff, Frankfurt RSO, P Järvi (2/12) (ONDI) ODE1195-2

*Tchaikovsky* – selected comparison:

Ehnes, Sydney SO, Ashkenazy (3/12) (ONYX) ONYX4076

## Listening points

Your guide to the disc's memorable moments

### Track 1: Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto – 1st movt, from 3'17"

As the memorable second theme unfolds, hear how Ray Chen enhances its narrative drive with constant changes of tone colour and emphasis.

### Track 1: Tchaikovsky – 1st movt, from 16'41"

From this point to the end of the movement, soloist and orchestra work together as one, building up to a truly rousing conclusion.

### Track 3: Tchaikovsky – 3rd movt, from 3'24"

In a passage that can appear excessively repetitive, Chen responds to each downward step of the

bass-line, maintaining tension until the rondo theme's return.

### Track 4: Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto – 1st movt, from 6'06"

Note the wonderful contribution of the trumpets to the overall sound! From this point, Chen's playing gradually becomes more intimate; a moment of deep introspection before rousing himself for the cadenza.

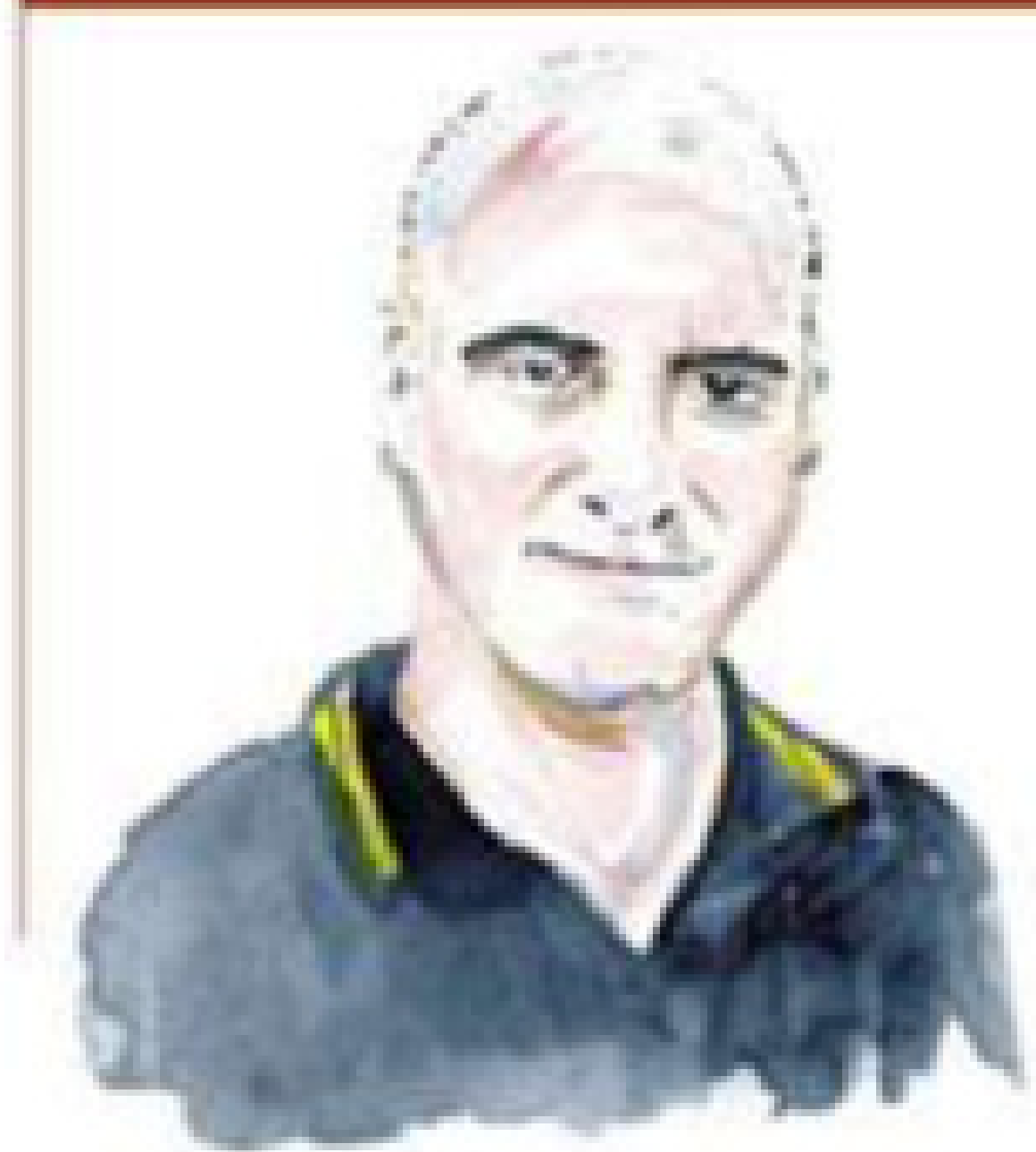
### Track 6: Mendelssohn – 3rd movt, from 0'55"

The finale's main theme sounds like beautifully played chamber music, with the woodwind perfectly matching Chen's phrasing and articulation.

**G** Visit the Gramophone Player at [gramophone.co.uk](http://gramophone.co.uk) to hear an excerpt from this issue's Recording of the Month



# Orchestral



## David Threasher reviews Schumann from Sophie Pacini:

'She has no fear of giving the performance a boot up the backside if she catches her accompanists napping' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 49**



## Rob Cowan on industry-inspired repertoire recorded in Istanbul:

'There's something uniquely exciting about hearing a keen young orchestra devouring difficult music whole' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 55**

## JS Bach

Keyboard Concertos – BWV1052; BWV1053; BWV1054; BWV1055; BWV1056; BWV1057; BWV1058

Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra / Konstantin Lifschitz *pf*  
Orfeo ② C828 112A (109' • DDD)



### Lifschitz with Bach, adding to the Baroque style debate

Bach's keyboard concertos were derived, in all cases, from previous contexts – whether original cantata sinfonias, oboe or violin concertos – but, as so often from the 1730s onwards, Bach liked to compile sets for posterity; six of the seven works (the G minor, BWV1058, was probably an earlier revision) are consciously assembled in the composer's 1738 autograph as a statement of growing interest in the keyboard as concerto protagonist.

All these works for solo 'clavier' and orchestra have received multiple readings on the piano over the years, of which Ramin Bahrami's recent charismatic excursions with the Gewandhaus and Chailly (Decca, 11/11) create a probing alternative to clunky conventionality or dainty 'period' manners. Chailly speaks of a 'third way' of stylistic synthesis but Konstantin Lifschitz aims here to take us on to a further level of inquisitiveness.

He often succeeds, since his Bach-playing is infused with a truly recognisable and fascinating personality and, at best, a remarkable sustainability of line. Listen to how, in the last movement of the D minor, BWV1052, Lifschitz harnesses himself to Bach's supreme voice-leading to guide his keen perception of dynamic possibility, texture and touch and, most of all, melodic intensity. Much the same musicality applies to fine performances of the F minor (BWV1056) and G minor concertos.

The E major, BWV1053, is witty, perhaps a little too gripped in places but delightfully lithe, as is the D major, BWV1054 (Bach's fine E major Violin Concerto reworking). Indeed, all the major-key pieces dance with clarity and purpose without quite summoning a rich sense of joy: the A major, BWV1055 – that perfect little gem of intimacy and generosity – irradiates a general sentiment of well-being but

not the familial and devotional warmth which is the *sine qua non* of its last movement. Lifschitz's top-class pedigree is plain for all to hear in the D major and his glassy touch is perhaps most beautifully realised in the F minor.

Some may find the recorded sound unfashionably recessed but the balance and discreet dialogue between the piano and the headily light Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra allow mainly for eloquence and congeniality, except, alas, in those movements where an incessantly clipped, almost motoric string articulation can become wearing, as it does in the F major (Fourth *Brandenburg* reborn). And why do the flutes play every note the same length?

Lifschitz is an unusually cultivated artist whose best-judged work here reflects Bach-playing of the highest order. A little less foursquare *froideur* from the band in some of the outer movements, in which he becomes vicariously complicit, and this would be rather more than a qualified success.

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

## Beethoven

Piano Concertos Nos 1-5

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra /

Rudolf Buchbinder *pf*

C Major Entertainment ② DVD 708808;

② 708904 (3h 36' • NTSC • 16:9 • DTS-HD MA 5.0, DTS 5.0 & PCM stereo • O)



### Buchbinder directs Beethoven's concertos from the keyboard

I wonder if directing the Beethoven piano concertos from the keyboard is going to become a new orthodoxy? I hope not. Exceptional conductor-pianists experienced in presenting the Mozart concertos in this way occasionally perform the Second Beethoven – the B flat major – to good effect but I'm not convinced the other four lend themselves to a chamber-like concentration of delivery. Granted, there are passages in which intimate voices and 'interior' qualities are to the fore but this is not chamber music writ large.

Rudolf Buchbinder is on easy terms with Beethoven and the piano but his familiarity doesn't seem to me to be matched by

distinction in directing the concertos. I wonder what the Vienna Philharmonic thought of him as a conductor; their faces give little away. It's obvious that his gestures, in spite of the busyness, are not making anything happen, much, and he doesn't transmit the notion that the soloist's role, in all its variety, is a determining factor in the interest of the whole. You just wait for him to resume playing and do the next bit. A collaborative venture is not on offer, therefore, only a traversal of these inexhaustible pieces in which any dramatic expression resulting from the interplay of piano and orchestra seems haphazard and, at best, generalised in effect.

Buchbinder is a player – a good one – rather than an interpreter, and nowhere is this more evident than in the first movement of the C major, No 1. He has observed that the opening movements of the first three concertos are all marked *Allegro con brio* but his way with them does not convey that they have different things to say. Tempo is a quality rather than a quantity – with, of course, an area of character suggested by *con brio*, but the qualifier doesn't make its nature exact and the same for each piece. In No 1 Buchbinder is spirited but not really exhilarating, the tempo held in so that the *fortissimo* downward run in semiquavers before the recapitulation can be played as wrist octaves rather than a *glissando*. On a half-hour interview track with Joachim Kaiser, Buchbinder shows himself to be proud of his ability to do this, apparently not having asked himself whether such a Lisztian effect might be inappropriate in a work of Beethoven of 1798.

And there you have him, I think, a man who plays Beethoven with the innocent self-assurance of the virtuoso – while claiming respectability (in the interview, again) through his possession of lots of editions and the comparative study of textual detail that these have afforded him. He is happiest in the set when his hands are full: in the finales, for instance, where the forthrightness and his technical address are admirable and he can cook up a storm or two. Could this be energy substituting for musically shaped phrasing and a true play of dynamic life? Well, possibly, but never mind. As for such subtleties as the magic and drama in the first movement of the *Emperor*





Beethoven in focus: Buchbinder plays and directs the piano concertos at the Musikverein, Vienna

when the orchestra produces ethereal effects and the piano withdraws into mysterious stillness – look elsewhere.

C Major is marketing these DVDs alongside its set of the Beethoven symphonies with the Vienna Philharmonic and Christian Thielemann ('Music to Watch'), reviewed by Peter Quantrill in April. When you have audio only the music stands alone and must satisfy down to the smallest detail. If you have the experience of hearing and seeing, the performance is of course appreciated by both senses. I've been a bit of a grouse, I know, but I doubt I'll be listening and watching again. **Stephen Plaistow**

## Beethoven

Piano Concerto No 3, Op 37. Triple Concerto, Op 56<sup>a</sup>

**Mari Kodama** *pf*<sup>a</sup> **Kolja Blacher** *vn*<sup>a</sup> **Johannes Moser** *vc*  
**Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin /**  
**Kent Nagano**

Berlin Classics © 0300331BC (70' • DDD)



### Kodama and friends in the Third and the Triple

The grand manner is implicit in Kent Nagano's opening of the Triple Concerto. Cellos and basses are deep yet *pianissimo*, as specified; yet the first *tutti* reveals a large orchestra, powerful but dense in texture. Wind instruments tend to

blend in and the two horns, also important partners of the piano trio, shine even less in this capacity than they do in other modern-orchestra performances. True, Beethoven often marked down their dynamics, but Nagano doesn't always factor that in. The soloists, a trifle more closely placed in the first movement than the other two, are individually and collectively very good. Johannes Moser is particularly fine in his exacting role while Mari Kodama's unobtrusive virtuosity pays dividends in the keyboard tracteries of the slow movement. The finale is too swift but this is nevertheless an accomplished performance.

So is that of the Third Piano Concerto, recorded in a drier acoustic. Orchestral lines register more clearly but the piano is rather forward of the ensemble. Tastelessly and inartistically, it's brought further forward for the first-movement cadenza. Kodama's technique is unassailable but she is only partially inside an emotionally knotty work. Flanking a brooding *Largo* (oboes and clarinets omitted) are two movements of sombre potency, all requiring an uninhibited interpretative commitment that Kodama is either unable or unwilling to give. She stands back, depriving the music of a full weight of insight – which Nagano appears to endorse. Good overall; but in each case the options are much finer. **Nalen Anthoni**

## Beethoven • Schumann

**Beethoven** Piano Sonata No 30, Op 109<sup>a</sup>. Variations and Fugue on an Original Theme, 'Eroica', Op 35<sup>a</sup>

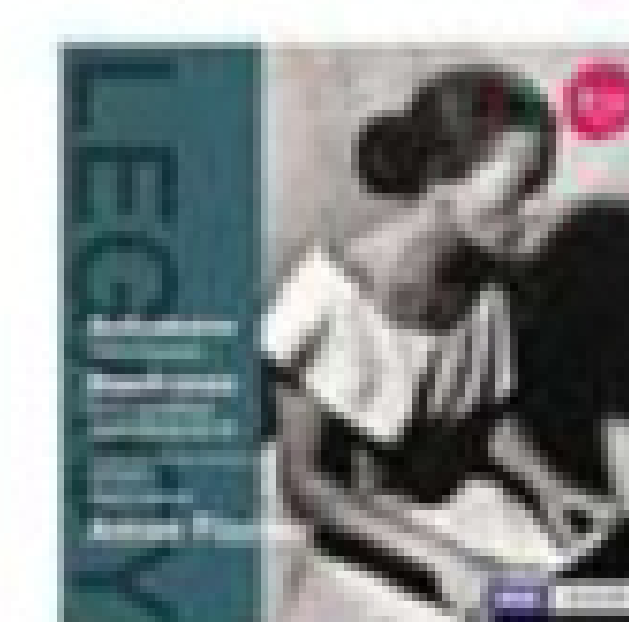
**Schumann** Piano Concerto, Op 54<sup>a</sup>

**Annie Fischer** *pf*<sup>b</sup> **Cologne Radio Symphony**

**Orchestra / Joseph Keilberth**

ICA Classics © ICAC5062 (73' • ADD)

Recorded at the Funkhaus, Cologne, <sup>a</sup>February 11, 1957;  
<sup>b</sup>April 28, 1958



### First issue for Fischer in 1950s Cologne concerts

If any great pianist merits the word 'integrity', it is surely Annie Fischer. Frequently described during her heyday as the greatest woman pianist (an opinion ruefully noted by Moura Lympany in her biography), she earned the awe and esteem of some of the greatest musicians, of Klemperer, Richter and Pollini. And, hearing her in ICA Classics' never-before-released recordings (Beethoven's *Eroica* Variations are a substantial addition to her recorded repertoire), you are made aware once more of Fisher's robust poetry, of her economical, never inflated or exaggerated style. Less mercurial than, say Moiseiwitsch, less vertiginous than Argerich in the Schumann Concerto, her performance is none the less one of fiery engagement and a grateful sinking into repose in the first movement's



melting A flat episode. Throughout, she abhors trickery of any kind – fancy gestures and phrasing – a quality demonstrated with superb authority in the *Eroica* Variations. Here, exuberance and a certain classical sobriety combine to produce playing with an unfaltering ring of truth. In the more rarefied regions of the Op 109 Sonata there is once again no false profundity, no preening mannerism but a transparent musicianship that allows you to hear Beethoven unclouded and unimpeded. This is a deeply gratifying issue and I can only wish that Fischer's performances of the Beethoven and Brahms concertos with Klemperer and her turbulent readings of Schumann's First and Chopin's Second Sonatas were available on record.

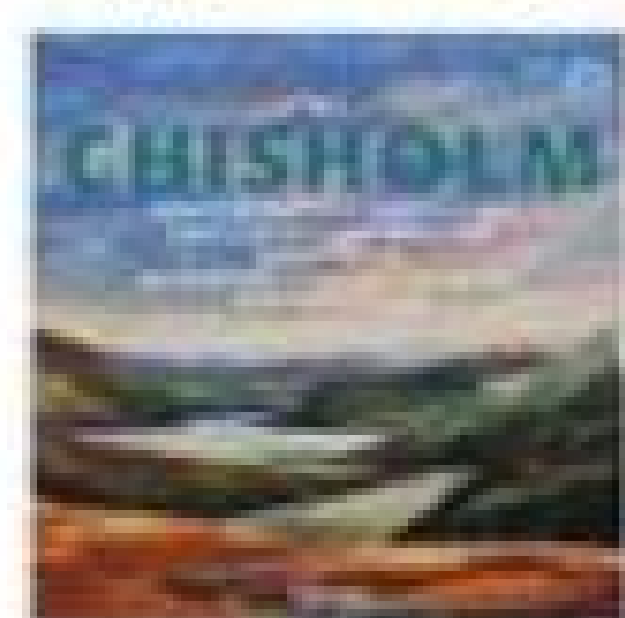
**Bryce Morrison**

## Chisholm

Piano Concertos – No 1, 'Piobaireachd';  
No 2, 'Hindustani'

**Danny Driver** *pf*

**BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra / Rory Macdonald**  
Hyperion © CDA67880 (69' • DDD)



### Driver with Scotsman Chisholm's two concertos

It would be difficult to over-praise this wonderfully enterprising disc. Erik Chisholm was born in Glasgow and his music is steeped in Scottish idioms, rhythms and dances. Ambitious, rich and original (though shadowed by Bartók, a key influence), the exceptionally intricate and demanding solo parts reflect Chisholm's piano studies with Leff Pouishnoff, but also with Tovey and Sorabji (a potent mix). Chisholm had played Bartók's First Concerto but, as John Purser tells us in his accompanying notes, the greater influence comes from the more vernal and reflective Third Concerto. He also goes to some length to explain the seeming oddity of how the first movement of the *Piobaireachd* Concerto is based on 'Maol Donn', a lament for the death of a favourite cow.

The *Hindustani* Concerto (Chisholm's favourite) reflects the composer's fascination with ragas, which permeate a positive kaleidoscope of ideas marshalled and directed with great daring and compositional skill. The challenge for both soloist and orchestra is immense and it would be hard to imagine playing of a more coruscating brilliance, delicacy and affection. The superb Danny Driver gives his all and is partnered to the hilt by the Scottish conductor Rory Macdonald, making his first appearance on record. Hyperion's balance and sound are exemplary. **Bryce Morrison**

## Dobrzyński · Lessel

**Dobrzyński Piano Concerto, Op 2<sup>a</sup>**

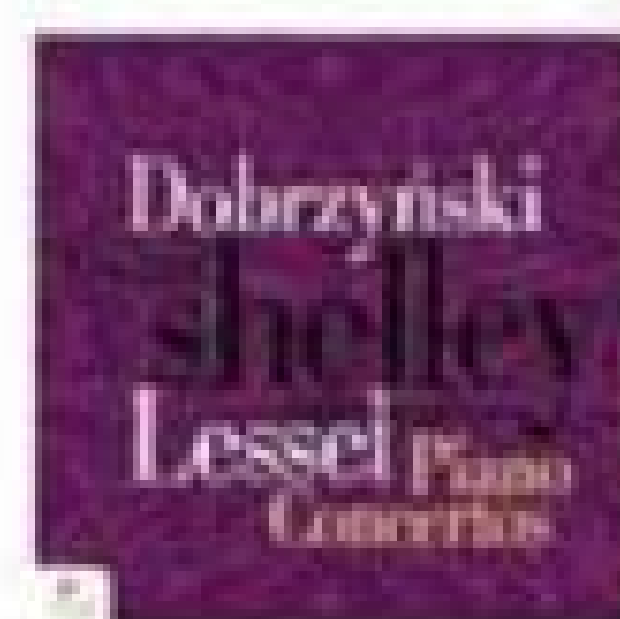
**Lessel Piano Concerto, Op 14<sup>b</sup>**

**Sinfonia Varsovia / Howard Shelley** *pf*

Fryderyk Chopin Institute © NIFCCD101 (59' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Philharmonic Hall, Warsaw.

<sup>a</sup>August 20, 2009; <sup>b</sup>August 25, 2010



### Shelley in Poland revives contemporaries of Chopin

'Music of Chopin's Time is a series of recordings from the Fryderyk Chopin Institute of Poland,' writes Stanisław Leszczyński, its artistic director, 'with an interest in recovering lost beauty.' It's a laudable aim with which these two enchanting works are in full accord. If, like me, you have not previously encountered their composers – and even those well-versed in Chopiniana are unlikely to have done so – I can tell you that the Polish Franciszek Lessel (c1780-1838) was a favourite pupil of Haydn and that his Piano Concerto in C was published in 1813 and first recorded in 1964 by Zbigniew Drzewiecki. Its musical language hovers between the Classical and Romantic. If you like Hummel's concertos, you'll almost certainly like this: traditional three movements, attractive themes and a mazurka finale with some daring melodic ideas. Ignacy Feliks Dobrzyński (1807-67) studied with Józef Elsner and was a classmate of Chopin from 1826, though his A flat Concerto was written two years earlier, when he was just 17, but never performed during his lifetime. It's a remarkable work with many points of similarity with Chopin's F minor Concerto, composed five years later. It comes as no surprise to learn that Elsner encouraged Chopin to model his concerto on Dobrzyński's.

Howard Shelley's uncanny ability to elevate good second-rate music to the level of minor masterpiece has been well documented in these pages (Herz, Kalkbrenner, Moscheles, Cramer and many others have benefited from his alchemy). Few other pianists are as well equipped to deliver the virtuoso and lyrical in equally persuasive measure – his phrase-shaping and grading of dynamics, especially in the Dobrzyński concerto, are outstanding – but to do so while conducting from the keyboard is another thing altogether. It is an achievement which, because it appears to be done with such ease, is in danger of being taken for granted. I hope this is never the case. Moreover, these are live performances. The audience applause at the end of each concerto was never more richly deserved.

**Jeremy Nicholas**

## Greenwood · Penderecki

**Greenwood Popcorn Superhet Receiver<sup>a</sup>**

**48 Responses to Polymorphia<sup>a</sup> Penderecki**

**Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima<sup>b</sup>**

**Polymorphia<sup>b</sup>**

**AUKSO Orchestra / <sup>a</sup>Marek Moś,**

**<sup>b</sup>Krzysztof Penderecki**

Nonesuch © 7559 79625-1 (53' • DDD)



### Penderecki's Polymorphia and Greenwood's response to it

Recorded in Kraków after performances in Wrocław by an ensemble from Katowice, this disc combines two works from Krzysztof Penderecki's radical early phase and two by Jonny Greenwood – who, as Composer in Association with the BBC Concert Orchestra, has created a notable portfolio of concert works this past decade.

Whatever the provenance of a work that started out as the Cage-inspired 8'37", *Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima* remains an uncompromising assault on the senses and the present account brooks no compromise. Quite a contrast with Greenwood's *Popcorn Superhet Receiver*, which builds via juxtaposition of 'white noise' and chorale-like harmonies; its central episode deploys *pizzicato* and *col legno* techniques to ominous effect, before a final section suggestive of Xenakis in its volatile dynamics and sweeping *glissandos*, then a sustained emotional apex. This visceral account from AUKSO outshines the softer-grained interpretation on Analekta.

*Polymorphia* allies its abundant range of sonorities to an oblique humour which became more pronounced in Penderecki's music over the following decade. Certainly its 'multiple shapes' convey an exemplary clarity in this performance, though the final C major chord cannot now be thought of as a provocation. Indeed, it forms the basis of Greenwood's *48 Responses to Polymorphia* (there being 48 strings in both works), unfolding over nine diverse yet cohesive sections in tandem with a Bachian chorale of his own devising, then climaxing in the dense textures of its sixth and seventh sections before the engaging rhythmic impetus of its closing minutes.

The AUKSO Orchestra again impresses with its fearless unanimity and attack, abetted by sound of unsparing immediacy. A pity another Penderecki piece for strings (*Kanon* or the later *Intermezzo*) could not have been chosen to extend the modest playing time but this hardly detracts from the qualities of the disc as it stands.

**Richard Whitehouse**

*Selected comparison:*

*Popcorn Superhet Receiver* – comparative version:

*Kitchener-Waterloo Orch, Ourwater (ANA) AN2 9992*

## Grieg · Rachmaninov

**Grieg Piano Concerto, Op 16**

**Rachmaninov Piano Concerto No 2, Op 18**

**Sa Chen** *pf* **Gulbenkian Orchestra / Lawrence Foster**

Pentatone © PTC5186 444 (67' • DDD/DSD)



### Sa Chen back with Foster for two staple concertos



Lawrence Foster is one of the best concerto accompanists in the business and almost always manages to impart freshness and character to such well-travelled soloist/orchestral terrain as the works on this vibrantly engineered SACD. Notice, for instance, the robust, focused trumpet section in the Grieg Concerto's first movement, the full-bodied lower strings that particularly come to the fore in the slow movement's climaxes, and the finale's crisp woodwind chording (why, however, is the first chord clipped?). Similarly, Rachmaninov's Second Concerto features such compelling details as the first-desk flute soloist's prodigious breath control in the *Adagio sostenuto* and excellent delineation of the *Allegro scherzando*'s fughetta (although not quite up to the crackling specifications of Katchen/Solti and Rubinstein/Reiner).

For her part, pianist Sa Chen thankfully eschews the attention-getting phrase elongations and foreground/background vagueness that spelt disaster for her previous Chopin collaborations with Foster. She projects the rolling passagework and multi-layered textures of the Rachmaninov's first movement with plenty of power and sweep, although her bland, directionless playing throughout much of the aforementioned slow movement leaves the conductor holding the expressive bag, so to speak. But her entrance in the *Allegro scherzando* pales besides the thunderbolt impact and speed with which Richter/Wislocki and Zimmerman/Ozawa pin your ears to the wall, while her swirling passagework is suave and accomplished without matching these pianists' incisive, pointed standards. In and of itself, Chen's well-modulated, regulation pianism does justice to the Grieg Concerto's solo part but she offers little that her recorded competitors have not done better. For example, her generalised articulation of the *animato e molto leggero* first-movement sequences lacks Murray Perahia's specificity and her dynamic eruptions in the first movement cadenza are sectionalised rather than connected like Howard Shelley's, not to mention Arthur Rubinstein's 1961 finale, with its captivating combination of tonal refinement and *joie de vivre*. Certainly collectors seeking this particular coupling on SACD won't be disappointed, yet the catalogue competition speaks for itself. **Jed Distler**

*Grieg – selected comparisons:*

Rubinstein, RCA Victor SO, Wallenstein

(2/57<sup>8</sup>, 8/86<sup>8</sup>) (RCA) 09026 63060-2

Perahia, Bavarian Rad SO, C Davis

(5/89<sup>8</sup>) (SONY) 88697 57372-2

Shelley, Op North Orch (5/09) (CHAN) CHAN10509

*Rachmaninov – selected comparisons:*

Katchen, LSO, Solti (3/59<sup>8</sup>) (DECC) 448 604-2DCS

Rubinstein, Chicago SO, Reiner (9/59<sup>8</sup>) (RCA) 09026 63035-2

Richter, Warsaw PO, Wislocki

(1/60<sup>8</sup>, 7/95) (DG) 447 420-2GOR

Zimmerman, Boston SO, Ozawa (4/04) (DG) 459 643-2GH

## Handel

Six Concerti grossi, Op 3, HWV312-17

Concerto Copenhagen / Lars Ulrik Mortensen

CPO © CPO777 488-2 (59' • DDD)



**Mortensen directs the Handel/Walsh concoction**

The London music-seller John Walsh published Op 3 in 1734. Experts agree that Walsh probably constructed six concertos from numerous old orchestral compositions (most of them not actually concerti grossi) without Handel's involvement or authority. Even if overshadowed in critical acclaim by the extraordinary Op 6 collection that Handel composed five years later as a coherent set, Op 3 contains some of his most attractive and diverse orchestral music.

Concerto Copenhagen's performances ooze abundantly with charm, wisdom and warmth. Passages for recorders, oboes and bassoon during the *Largo* of Concerto No 1 in B flat are played exquisitely. Courtly rhythms spring disarmingly in the *Vivace* of Concerto No 2 in B flat; the following *Largo* is paced a fraction quicker than one often hears it but Lars Ulrik Mortensen's harpsichord continuo is imaginative in its support for the intimate dialogue between two cellos and Frank de Bruine's beautifully judged oboe solo. Katy Bircher's subtle contributions to Concerto No 3 in G major bring to mind the common Baroque opera aria simile of the soft, sweet singing of a nightingale. The Minuet that concludes Concerto No 4 in F major is correctly an elegant dance, the *Vivace* that begins Concerto No 6 in D major has a surprisingly understated airiness, and Mortensen's fluent playing of the tricky quick organ solos in the concluding *Allegro* are articulated flawlessly. Such classy moments make this one of the most endearing artistic interpretations of Op 3 in recent years, which ranks alongside other special recordings such as those by Tafelmusik and the Brandenburg Consort. **David Vickers**

*Selected comparisons:*

Tafelmusik, Lamon (7/93) (SONY) SK52553

Brandenburg Consort, Goodman (6/93<sup>8</sup>) (HYPERION) CDH55075

## Horneman

Gurre-Suite. Kampen med Muserne (The Contest with the Muses) – Suite. Ouverture héroïque ('Helteliv'). Kalanus – Suite

Danish National Symphony Orchestra / Johannes Gustavsson

Dacapo © 6 220564 (66' • DDD/DSD)



**Examining Denmark's 'indie' music educationalist**

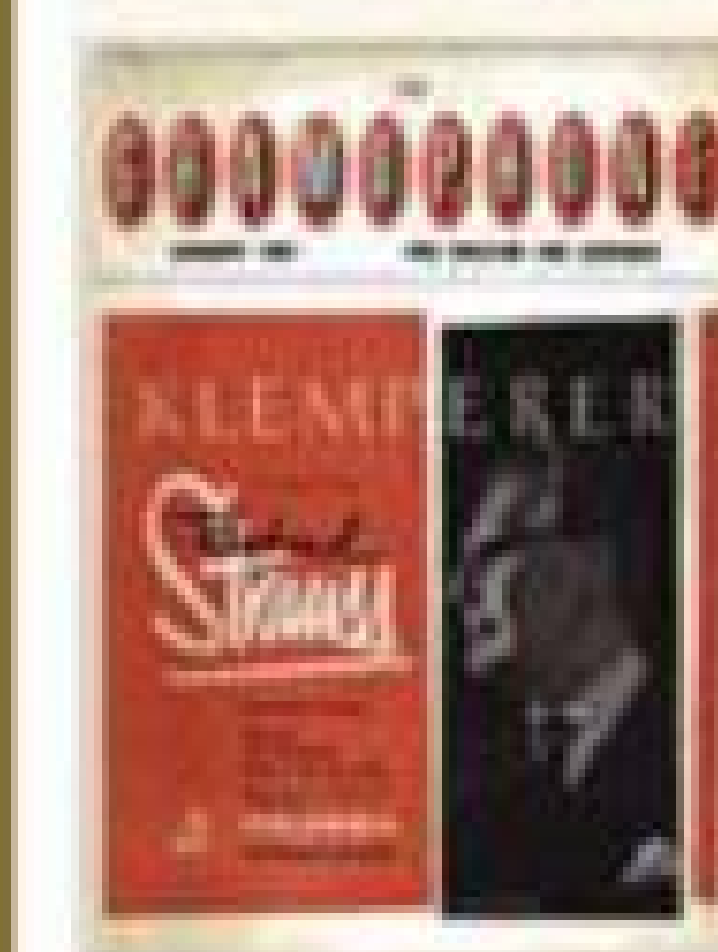
Carl Nielsen cited Christian Horneman (1840-1906) as a vitally fresh voice in Danish music:

January 1960

**Richter records Rachmaninov**

Our review of Sviatoslav Richter's recording of the Russian concerto warhorse

## Rachmaninov



Piano Concerto No 2, Op 18.  
Preludes from Opp 23 & 32  
Sviatoslav Richter *pf*  
Warsaw National Philharmonic  
Symphony Orchestra /  
Stanislav Wislocki

DG ● SLPM138076 (12in, 30s)

*Selected stereo comparisons:*

Katchen, LSO, Solti (3/59) SXL2076

Rubinstein, Chicago SO, Reiner (9/59) SB2043

This is the first of Richter's records that I have heard and I can only say that I subscribe to every word of praise that I have read about this superb pianist and artist. I don't know that I can remember ever hearing a concerto record which has excited me so greatly. And both the orchestral accompaniment and the quality and balance of the recording (especially in the stereo version) play their part in this wonderful production.

I cannot help but feel that Richter has possibly played *his* part in achieving these qualities, too. I do not know Wislocki, the conductor, but if he is always as inspired as he sounds here, then he must be remarkable. I do not at all mean to denigrate his achievement when I suggest that Richter's close collaboration may well have helped him to achieve so fine an orchestral contribution. As to the recording, here is at any rate one piano concerto where the soloist and orchestra are properly balanced and again, I have the feeling that Richter cares about every note in the orchestral score as much as he does about those in his own part and may have seen to it that everything is there. The amount of detail that comes over on the stereo disc is really astonishing and I heard all sorts of things that I've never before heard on a record – and seldom in the concert hall.

As to Richter's playing, it holds one spellbound, whether in ravishing soft passages or in fiery brilliance. He takes a number of liberties with speed – the two *meno mosso* interludes in the finale, for example, are extraordinarily slow – but everything he does is utterly convincing simply because it has been thought out by a supreme artist.

As I write my mind is still full of the control and then the excitement of the opening bars, of the perfectly expressed romanticism of Rachmaninov's melodies, of the delicacy of decoration, and of the tremendous *scherzando* fun of the start of the finale.

**Trevor Harvey**

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Photo: Gabriela Brandenstein





Playing with history: Capriccio Baroque Orchestra recording Lully at the Musiksaal Kurbrunnenanlage, Rheinfelden, Switzerland

will this disc tell us why? The booklet-notes eschew any discussion of Horneman's music to discuss his frustrated life – 'full of ideas and initiatives, but unfortunately few of them endured very long' – and it's tempting if facile to say the same of his work. It's hard to understand what, apart from creative paralysis, could have caused Horneman to be six years late in delivering the music for *The Contest with the Muses* (1896) if the rest of it is on a level with these four extracts, the highlight of which is a 'mystical' hymn to Apollo for two-part female chorus along the lines of Brahms's Op 17 set but with more parallel thirds. Dating from his twenties, the *Hero's Life* overture is a broken-backed affair (done with swashbuckling vigour by this orchestra and Michael Schönwandt – Chandos, 2/96) which does not compare well to Danish concert overtures of similarly grand dramatic designs but tauter means such as Gade's *Hamlet*, JPE Hartmann's *Hakon Jarl* or Lange-Müller's *Viking Blood*. In the suite from *Kalamus*, both the resort to repeated figures at celebratory junctures and the evident Goethe-derived fascination with the mystic East remind me of Schumann's *Peri*, but not in Horneman's favour. On a BIS CD, Owain Arwel Hughes cherry-picks the most intriguing movement of the suite, which evokes the feverish dreams of the eponymous Indian sage. Gustavsson's much quicker tempo conveys a certain restlessness but of a limited, superficially physical nature ('the blanketing tickles, you feel like mixed pickles' according to *Iolanthe's* Lord Chancellor), whereas Hughes uncovers a steadily mounting, proto-Sibelian disenchantment. The neat playing and close recording of the new disc bring a classicising tendency, and I feel not to Horneman's advantage. Until his opera

*Aladdin* receives a complete recording, the *Gurre-Suite* remains the most convincing demonstration of his gifts. Composed 18 years after Jens Peter Jacobsen's poem and the same year that Schoenberg began his setting, it crystallises the passion and desperation of this most gloomily Danish of legends into four movements from incidental music for a play; Gustavsson points the rhythms well enough but I'd still turn to Hughes or, better still, Schönwandt, who alone has recorded the complete score, for a more persuasively Romantic approach. **Peter Quantrill**

## Liszt

Piano Concertos<sup>a</sup> – No 1, S124; No 2, S125. Totentanz, S126<sup>a</sup>. Orpheus, S98. Héroïde funèbre, S102

<sup>a</sup>Denis Matsuev pf

Russian National Orchestra / Mikhail Pletnev  
RCA Red Seal © ② (two discs for the price of one)  
88697 98945-2 (89' • DDD)



### Pianists at the keyboard and on the podium for Liszt concertos

Denis Matsuev won the 1998 Tchaikovsky Competition with a performance of Liszt's First Concerto and has since emerged, in recital and on disc, as one of the most exciting pianists around. Partnered by one of the great pianist/conductors of the day, we can expect the sparks to fly. They do – but only after a measured opening to the First Concerto, allowing them to hold plenty of firepower in reserve. When the times comes, they certainly deliver: the repeated notes at 1'55" in the finale (*Allegro marziale animato*) are brilliantly articulated, followed by a faithful observation of Liszt's requests for ever-increasing tempi. The Second Concerto, too, is up there with the best (Freire,

Hough, Katchen, Cohen inter alia), a far cry from the recent dreary Barenboim/Boulez excursion (DG, 1/12). *Totentanz* is presented with a few tweaks to the solo part and the puzzling addition of four bars of solo horn calls at 10'36" which I can find neither in the solo piano nor the piano-and-orchestra score. Matsuev in the fugato (Var 5) is hair-raising.

This conventional triptych comes with an unconventional extra disc on which Pletnev and his orchestra give us two contrasting symphonic poems. *Orpheus* is a mainly contemplative depiction of the sublime and the sensuous parts of love. *Héroïde funèbre* ('Lamentation for Heroes' is one translation, 'Heroic Elegy' is another) is one of Liszt's most extraordinary utterances, in which orchestral colours rather than themes and motifs are the prime concern. Is there a more desolate, unsettling opening to a work from the 19th century? Pletnev would have us think not. **Jeremy Nicholas**

## Lully

Armide – suite. Atys – suite. Phaëton – suite

Capriccio Baroque Orchestra / Dominik Kiefer *vn*  
Tudor © TUDOR7185 (63' • DDD)



### Lully's music as the composer wouldn't have heard it

With this recording we enter a new phase of interpreting early music. Dominik Kiefer and his Capriccio colleagues approach the music of Lully from a fresh angle, by choosing to recreate the manner in which it was performed abroad in the decades immediately after the composer's death, rather than focusing on the first performances at Versailles and in Paris.

Taking the editions of instrumental music from the Lully operas published in



Amsterdam by Estienne Roger between 1697 and 1712 as their starting point, Capriccio assimilated the changes in the scoring that were made to suit musical establishments in London, Brussels and a number of German cities – shrinking the string textures from five to four voices; doubling both violin parts with winds rather than merely the first violin; using cellos rather than the less agile French basses and sometimes doubling them at the octave with a double bass – and here offer us three different possibilities.

For the listener (and critic) accustomed to the burnished opera recordings of Les Arts Florissants, Les Musiciens du Louvre and the Collegium Vocale/La Chapelle Royale, this is an ear-opener. The Swiss-based Capriccio orchestra perform suites of instrumental music from Lully's *Phaëton* with a large orchestra, *Atys* with a small, soloistic ensemble and *Armide* with a medium-size court orchestra (or civic collegium musicum). The effects of these experiments are various; but, in general, the arrangements produce brighter, less blended, more polarised textures, especially when the double bass is present. Whereas Lully intended the orchestra to create an atmosphere in support of a spectacle, these versions must stand alone as concert music, without reference to singers or staging, and so rely more on ensemble brilliance, including more ornamentation and *inégalité* than Lully would have allowed.

Much the most successful of the three is the orchestration applied to *Armide*, both in terms of scale and because of the absence of the double bass. Capriccio has, nevertheless, provided a fascinating, valuable glimpse into the perils of presenting a very particular repertoire shorn of its original context and idiosyncratic orchestration. **Julie Anne Sadie**

## Mahler • Webern

**Mahler** Symphony No 1 **Webern** *Im Sommerwind*  
**SWR Symphony Orchestra, Baden-Baden and Freiburg / François-Xavier Roth**  
Hänssler Classic © CD93 294 (76' • DDD)  
Recorded live at the Konzerthaus, Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany, October-November 2011



**Roth's recorded debut with his new German orchestra**

Any new Mahler symphony in the recording catalogue these days had better have a good reason behind it. Fortunately, François-Xavier Roth, the new principal conductor of the SWR Sinfonieorchester Baden-Baden und Freiburg, makes his debut recording for Hänssler with an inspired pairing of Mahler's First with an early tone-poem of Anton Webern.

Not that the Mahler itself doesn't have plenty to recommend it. Roth's reading is smooth and carefully balanced, almost to a

fault. The piece unfolds as if, in trying to fit Mahler carefully into the Germanic symphonic lineage of Beethoven, Schubert and Brahms, Roth has consciously chosen to downplay the very personal idiosyncrasies in Mahler's music that so many other conductors have played up.

Where the recording really succeeds, though, is in extending that musical lineage through to Anton Webern. His uncharacteristically lush *Im Sommerwind* of 1904 is something of an anomaly – within weeks of completing the work, Webern met Arnold Schoenberg and his music would veer in a starkly different direction – and relatively under-recorded, yet Roth gives it full attention. Rather than being positioned apologetically as an indiscretion, the Webern comes off with full Romantic force, much in the same musical mind as Mahler and fully equal to the First Symphony in its youthful enthusiasm.

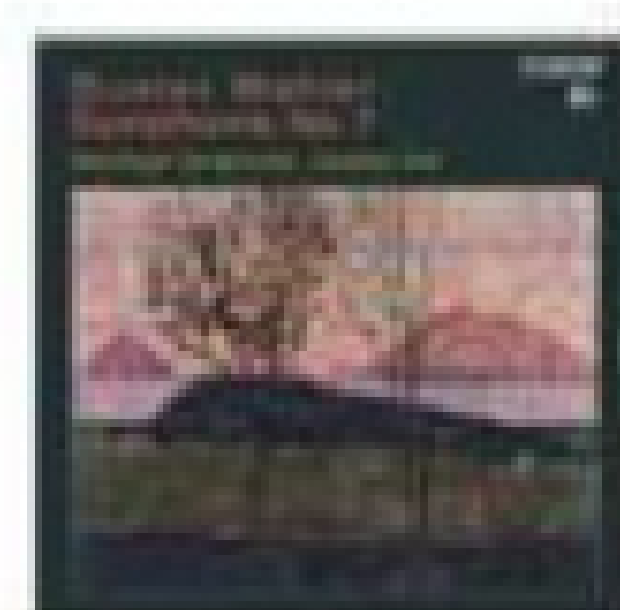
Based on their first outing together, Roth's future with the orchestra bears watching. At bottom, this respectable programme succeeds in making us contemplate a world of possibilities and of roads not taken. For a moment, you could almost conceive of a world where Schoenberg never existed.

**Ken Smith**

## Mahler

Symphony No 7

**Bamberg Symphony Orchestra / Jonathan Nott**  
Tudor © TUDOR7176 (80' • DDD/DSD)



**Nott and his Bambergers arrive at Mahler's Seventh**

We've come to expect certain qualities from this Bamberg/Nott Mahler cycle – not least real stylistic awareness and exceptional attention to detail – and this beautifully prepared and acutely well-heard Seventh is no exception. Perhaps Nott's most notable achievement here lies in uncovering beauty and fascination and a certain sensuousness beneath the often strange and misshapen, the weird and the grotesque. There is perhaps a small cost in the primitivism of the piece, which it could be argued is a little soft-grained, but its myriad abstractions sound fresh and new, and rarely has a performance in my experience felt more 'experimental', as if the Second Viennese School were already in the room.

Nott's opening movement – always controversial in terms of its tempo relationships – seems to carry a heavy burden of curiosity. The second idea is enervatingly slow to the point of feeling totally off-kilter, uncertain how or why it must move forward. The movement is never quite a slow march, more a pagan processional festooned to glittering effect in the spectacular coda. But the Mahler we know and love resides in the central section, where the harp *glissandos* to

tranquil heights in music that the Bambergers play and feel most affectingly.

Refinements abound in the middle movements. Nott finds new surprises. Fantastical extremes of sonority take us higher and lower than we customarily go: the spook-house *Scherzo*, with all its shrieking *glissandos*, is fascinating more than threatening and the guitar- and mandolin-flecked *Nachtmusik II* is super-deft and of truly fragile beauty. I don't think I've ever been invited to listen so intently to it.

Notwithstanding Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, surely the finale of Mahler's Seventh is the true 'apotheosis of the dance'. Nott pointedly avoids the usual thrash-and-bash, finding bags of variety and dynamic nuance in the elegance and/or ineptitude of the footwork. For once there is only one huge climax, and that's the final swell into the bell-laden flashback of the symphony's opening movement. One to hear – and superbly engineered, too. **Edward Seckerson**

## Mortensen

Symphony, Op 5. *Pezzo orchestrale*, Op 12.

*Evolution*, Op 23. *Per orchestra*, Op 30

**Munich Radio Orchestra / Terje Mikkelsen**  
Simax © PSC1306 (63' • DDD)



**Munich taping for benchmark Norwegian symphony**

A work of undeniably quality, Finn Mortensen's only symphony (1952-53) looks, Janus-like, forwards and backwards. The low opus number and post-Romantic idiom confirm its early provenance yet, despite its composer's initial misgivings, it is now the benchmark for all Norwegian symphonies. All four movements contain elements Mortensen revisited in later, stylistically more advanced pieces.

The Munich Radio Orchestra give a splendid account of it under Terje Mikkelsen's firm direction, allowing the symphony's expansive nature full rein while underlining the holistic nature of its thematic relationships: thus the opposing themes of the opening *Allegro moderato* are reconciled (up to a point) in the succeeding *Adagio*, while the brilliant *Allegro vivace scherzo* synthesises elements before the final fugue recalls the *Allegro moderato*'s second theme in a glorious apotheosis. Memories of Mariss Jansons's pioneering Philips recording with the Oslo Philharmonic (reissued a few years ago by Aurora) are not banished but this is the recording for the new millennium.

The remaining three works occupy collectively about one third of the disc, such was the concentration of Mortensen's style as he moved on through the 1950s and '60s. *Pezzo orchestrale* (1957) remained unplayed until 2003 and is a revealing document of the fracturing of



his idiom as he assimilated the lessons of dodecaphony, fully adopted in *Evolution* (1961), with its ubiquitous violin pedal. If he had been playing catch-up in those works, *Per orchestra* (1967) shows him ahead of the game in evolving his own postmodern version. *Evolution* and *Per orchestra* baffled many critics but the late Arne Nordheim realised their worth. These Munich performances are compelling despite the unfamiliarity of the style. Simax's sound is excellent. Strongly recommended.

Guy Rickards

## Nørgård

Violin Concertos<sup>a</sup> – No 1, 'Helle Nacht';  
No 2, 'Borderlines'. Spaces of Time<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Peter Herresthal *vn* <sup>b</sup>Ida Mo *pf*

Stavanger Symphony Orchestra / Rolf Gupta  
BIS © BIS-CD1872 (68' • DDD)



### The two violin concertos of 80th-birthday Dane Nørgård

Per Nørgård's First Violin Concerto, *Helle Nacht* ('Bright Night', 1986-87), is a beautifully crafted, illustrative suite in four movements inspired by the Nordic night skies in summer. Christina Åstrand made a fine recording (coupled with Ligeti's concerto) in 1999 which won a Diapason d'Or (Chandos, 10/00). However, Herresthal plays here the reduction for chamber orchestra Nørgård made at his suggestion in 2002, which gives the music an extra transparency that proves even more beguiling than the original, which is accordingly not directly comparable.

The Second Concerto, *Borderlines* (2002), only required string orchestral and percussion support from the outset and affords a very different musical experience. The soloist navigates and negotiates his way through the clash and interplay of two very different musical systems, Western chromaticism and microtonality. Herresthal plays compellingly, his account richer and slightly tauter than Rebecca Hirsch's fine rival version; BIS's sound is superior, with greater depth, albeit Dacapo's is in no sense inadequate.

The 'filler' is scarcely less substantial than the concertos, the engaging *Spaces of Time* (1991), a tone-poem or fantasy in the form of variations not so much on a theme but on the idea of the dichotomy between continuous musical flow and separate spaces which the music inhabits. Along the way, the work morphs into a mini piano concerto, Ida Mo getting the bit between her teeth in the latter stages. The Stavanger Symphony Orchestra deliver sensitive accompaniments in the concertos and relish taking centre stage in *Spaces of Time*. Gupta, a former composition student of Nørgård, is wholly comfortable inside the idiom and communicates this security of response to his orchestra. Coupled

with BIS's state-of-the-art sound, this issue is self-recommending. **Guy Rickards**

*Vn Conc No 2 – comparative version:*

Hirsch, Copenhagen PO, Bellincampi (A/04) (DACA) 8 226014

## Penderecki

Sinfoniettas – No 1; No 2<sup>a</sup>. Three Pieces in the Antique Style. Serenade. Intermezzo. Capriccio<sup>b</sup>

<sup>b</sup>Jean-Louis Capezzali *ob* <sup>a</sup>Artur Pachlewski *cl*

Warsaw Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra /

Antoni Wit

Naxos © 8 572212 (58' • DDD)



### Wit with small-scale orchestral Penderecki

Placing the earliest (1963) and most recent (1997) works together at the beginning of this programme neatly confirms that Penderecki didn't simply regress from radical to conservative during these three decades. Even though the *Three Pieces in the Antique Style* are film-music pastiche rather than a fully fledged concert item, they convey a relish for decorous late-Romantic expressiveness that eventually supplanted the modish avant-garde alarms and excursions for which he was best known in the 1960s.

The Capriccio for oboe and strings (1964) represents Penderecki's personal angle on Sixties modernism and packs a considerable punch despite its derivative qualities. As late as 1973, the Intermezzo for 24 strings projects an expressionistic attitude to texture and structure that still impresses today, especially in a performance as full-blooded as this one. After that, the two Sinfoniettas – the first (1992) adapted from a String Trio, the second (1994) from a Clarinet Quartet – seem much more pallid, all too prone to the kind of nondescript, quasi-improvisatory lyric rambling that is occasionally interrupted by something more energetic but which never builds into the kind of truly postmodern evolutionary design that might have been the intention. Only in the second movement of the Sinfonietta No 1 does something approaching a strongly shaped musical argument emerge. As for the two-movement Serenade (1997), there's plenty of fervent intensity in the way Antoni Wit and the Warsaw Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra put the music across but that can't compensate for lack of energy and personality in the actual ideas. **Arnold Whittall**

## Rachmaninov • Rubinstein

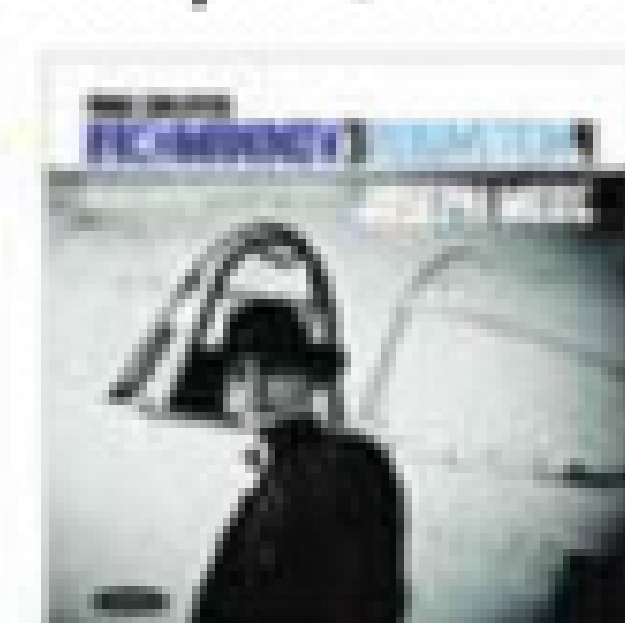
Rachmaninov Piano Concerto No 3, Op 30

Rubinstein Piano Concerto No 4, Op 70

Joseph Moog *pf* Rhineland Palatinate State

Philharmonic Orchestra / Nicholas Milton

Onyx © ONYX4089 (70' • DDD)



### 24-year-old Moog with big-beast keyboard concertos

Anton Rubinstein's Fourth Piano Concerto is a once-popular showpiece that featured in the repertoires of pianists such as Hofmann and Cherkassky. Today, even given with Joseph Moog's magisterial command, its grandiloquence seems faded, with Romantic gestures very much of yesteryear. Moog cannot quite match Marc-André Hamelin's blistering attack on Hyperion but he runs him a close second and comes into his own in Rachmaninov's far greater Third Concerto. Here this 24-year-old German pianist may occasionally sound more relentless than giving, though the chill wind he blows through even the most lyrically assuaging passages will seem authentic to some.

Less generally, Moog is at his most interesting in the mercurial twists and turns he gives the cadenza (the slimmer, less heavyweight of the two). He also throws off the central Intermezzo's skittering *scherzando* variation with its volleys of repeated notes with an almost outrageous assurance and, fast and furious in the finale, makes it impossible for you not to get caught up in the thrill of the chase. There may be more affecting Rachmaninov Third Concertos on record – pride of place still goes to the composer himself, Horowitz live with Barbirolli on APR, Gilels, Cliburn live from the 1958 Tchaikovsky Competition, and Argerich – but it is certainly among the most formidable. **Bryce Morrison**

*Rachmaninov – selected comparisons:*

Gilels (1/56\*) (EMI) 345819-2

Argerich (8/95) (PHIL) 446 673-2PH

Horowitz (6/97) (APR) APR5519

Cliburn (2/09) (TEST) SBT1440

Rachmaninov (RCA) 82876 67892-2

*Rubinstein – selected comparison:*

Hamelin (10/05) (HYPE) CDA67508

## Rachmaninov • Stravinsky

Rachmaninov Symphonic Dances, Op 45

Stravinsky Symphony in Three Movements

London Symphony Orchestra / Valery Gergiev

LSO Live © LSO0688 (59' • DDD/DSD)

Recorded live at the Barbican, London, May 2009



### May 2009 concerts captured live at the Barbican

The first movement of Rachmaninov's *Symphonic Dances* is marked *Non allegro*, one of those tricky indications that lets you know what the pace shouldn't be but is not really more positively explicit. Rachmaninov clearly wanted to discourage undue speed but it is hard to imagine that he had in mind the sluggishness that Gergiev prefers here. Other conductors of this now happily much-recorded final orchestral work of Rachmaninov's manage to find a tempo that is not fast but nevertheless has inner momentum to give the music a sense of direction; but Gergiev's performance hangs



# DVD & BLU-RAY RELEASES



**MACBETH Verdi**  
Royal Opera House

With Simon Keenlyside making his British debut as an athletic, brooding Macbeth and Liudmyla Monastyrskaya as his Lady, both imperious and subtle, this performance, masterfully conducted by Antonio Pappano, goes far beyond mere sound and fury.

AVAILABLE ON DVD & BLU-RAY



**THE MAGIC FLUTE Mozart**  
Teatro alla Scala

From the Queen of the Night's vocal pyrotechnics to Papageno's chirpy birdsongs, *The Magic Flute* is one of Mozart's most charming and engaging operas. However, its fairy-tale surface conceals the mysteries of an initiation ritual and a multi-layered plot, packed with allegories to fire up the imagination.

AVAILABLE ON DVD & BLU-RAY



**EUGENE ONEGIN Tchaikovsky**  
De Nederlandse Opera

Stefan Herheim's productions create controversy and excitement around Europe. Here he takes Pushkin's story of illusion, disaffection and frustrated love, and places the protagonists in a triple temporal perspective, referencing the theatrical present, the period of the work's composition, and the pageant of Russia's history.

AVAILABLE ON DVD & BLU-RAY



**DIE FRAU OHNE SCHATTEN Strauss**  
Salzburg Festival

The epic fairytale recounted by Strauss and his librettist Hofmannsthal in *Die Frau ohne Schatten* acquires a further allegorical dimension in Christof Loy's inventive production for the Salzburg Festival. Christian Thielemann and the Vienna Philharmonic rise gloriously to the challenges of Strauss's operatic score.

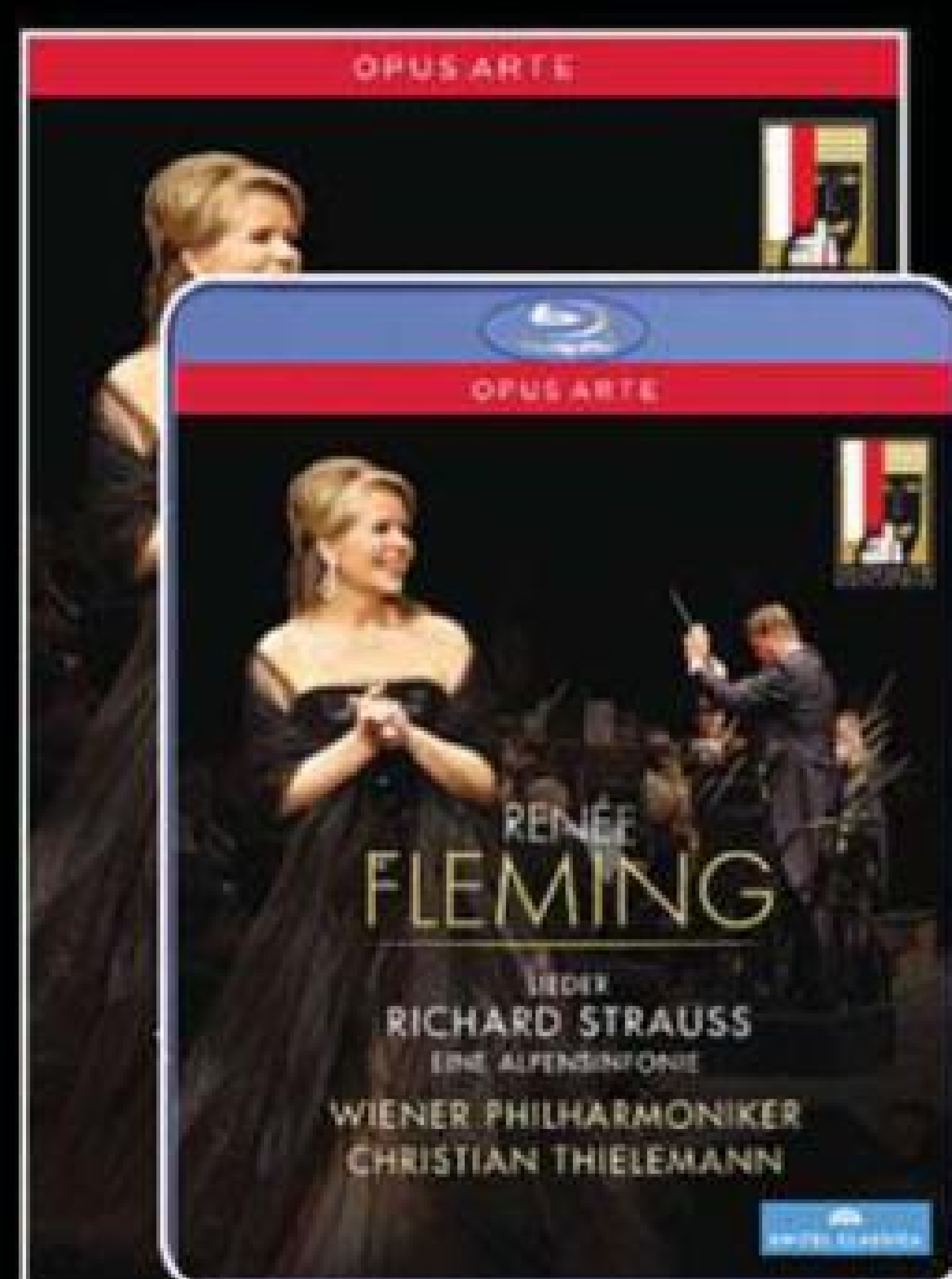
AVAILABLE ON DVD & BLU-RAY



**L'INCORONAZIONE DI POPPEA Monteverdi**  
Liceu

David Alden's visually sumptuous production, with its suggestions of a giant game of chess, puts the opera's potent blend of sex and politics in a context that sets ancient against modern. Monteverdi's magnificent score is led by Sarah Connolly and Miah Persson.

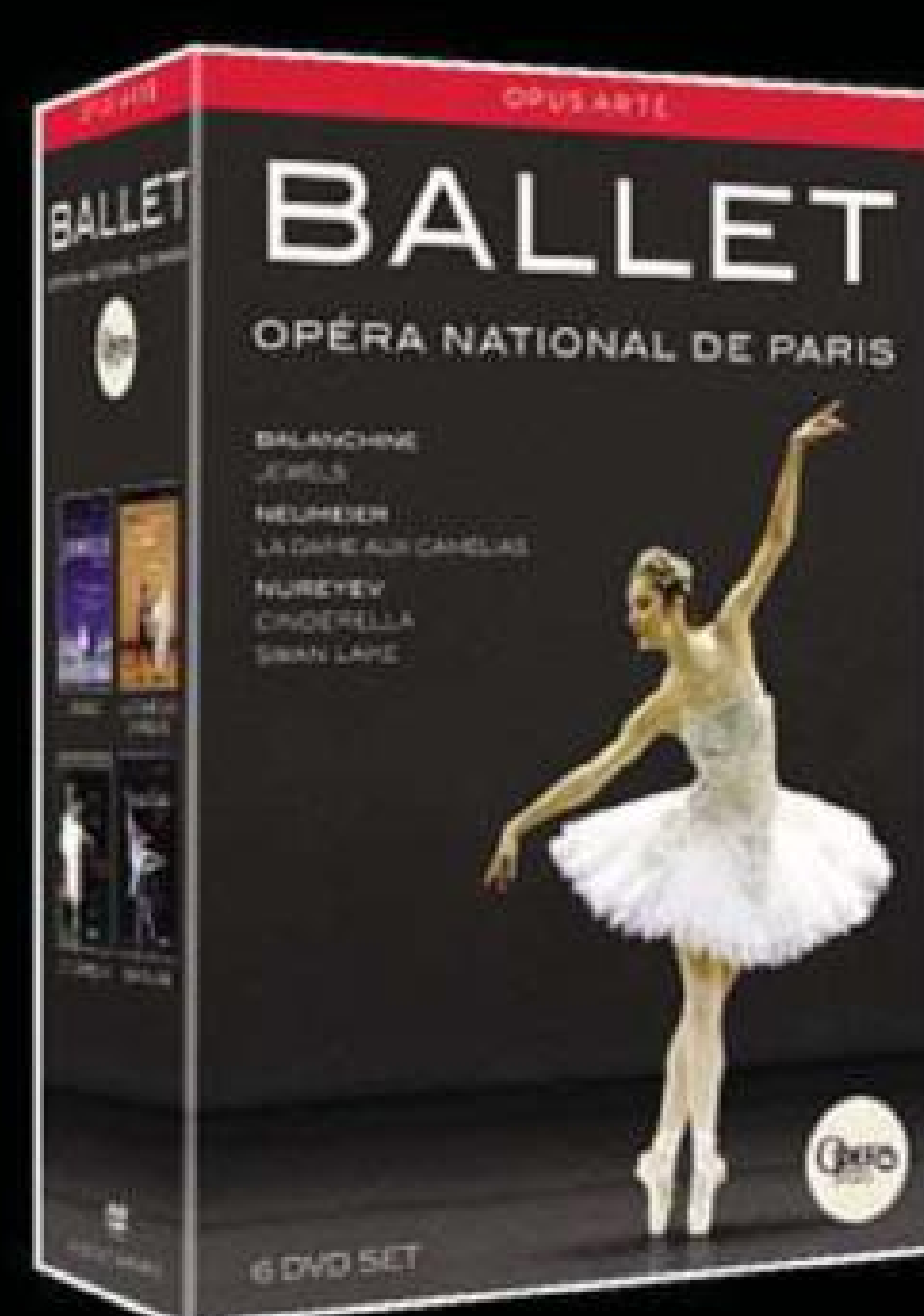
AVAILABLE ON DVD & BLU-RAY



**RENÉE FLEMING Strauss**  
Salzburg Festival

Richard Strauss, Renée Fleming, Christian Thielemann and the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra unite for a programme of song, opera and tone poem, genres central to the composer's extraordinarily fruitful career.

AVAILABLE ON DVD & BLU-RAY



**PARIS OPERA BALLET**  
Opéra National de Paris

Bringing together four seminal works, this attractive collection offers a perfect introduction to the world's oldest national ballet company. Titles include *Jewels*, *La Dame aux camélias*, *Cinderella* and *Swan Lake*.

6 DVD SET



**LOVE, PASSION & DECEIT**  
Glyndebourne

The Glyndebourne Festival is a quintessentially English summer event. The world's most acclaimed artists, conductors and directors excel in producing top-flight performances. This latest collection includes *La Cerentola*, *Così Fan Tutte* and *Die Fledermaus*.

3 DVD SET



fire. The *valse triste* of the central movement, while at times aptly mysterious and sultry of atmosphere, lacks the supple pulse of the dance and it is not until the finale that the interpretation gathers spirit, although even here Gergiev tends to pull back detrimentally in the slower middle section. He elicits a fair amount of instrumental detail from Rachmaninov's luminous scoring but it is at the cost of cohesive overall structure.

However, the indulgences of the moment that he permits himself in the *Symphonic Dances* are expunged in Stravinsky's *Symphony in Three Movements*, which, like the Rachmaninov, was recorded live at London's Barbican in May 2009. This is a big-boned performance, its syncopations crisply articulated by the LSO, its powerful rhythmic impetus kept on a tight rein, its palette of timbres well delineated. So this is one of those maddening discs that might be recommendable for one of the works but not for the other. **Geoffrey Norris**

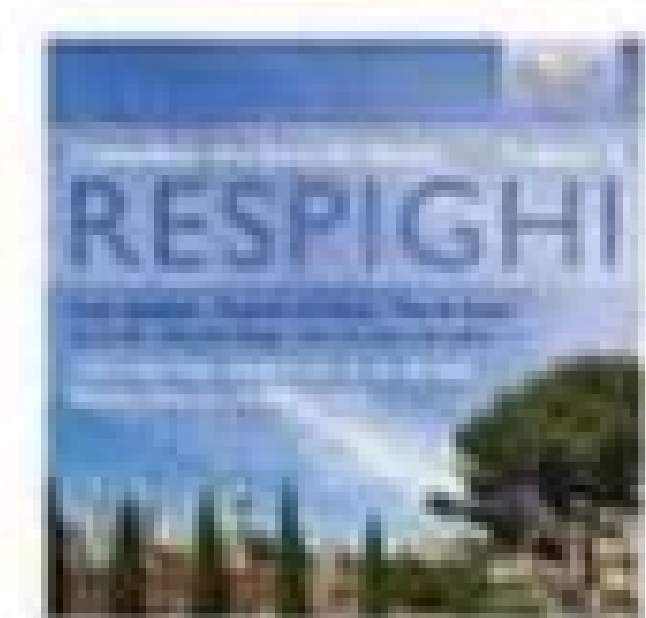
## Respighi

'Complete Orchestral Works, Vol 1'

Feste romane. Fontane di Roma. Pini di Roma. Gli Uccelli. Suite for Strings. Suite for Strings and Organ<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Antonio Palcich *org* Rome Symphony Orchestra / Francesco La Vecchia

Brilliant Classics © ② 94392 (146' • DDD)



### First fruits of a new Roman Respighi project

Respighi's sizeable orchestral output has only latterly come into its own on disc and this release from Brilliant is announced as the first volume of a complete traversal. It gives a pertinent overview, moreover, of the twin aspects that inform the composer's thinking throughout his maturity: namely Italy's scenic and musical past.

Disc 1 features the 'Roman Triptych' that has long conveyed Respighi to a wider audience. Working with the Orchestra Sinfonica di Roma (familiar from its survey of unfamiliar Italian music on Naxos), Francesco La Vecchia has the measure of *Fountains of Rome*, not least an unusually leisurely account of the 'Villa Medici' finale, whose placing of detail is as deftly achieved as its evocation of atmosphere. If the two later suites are rather less successful, this is because the orchestral response lacks the virtuosity fully to project the music's finesse and panache; movements such as the 'Appian Way' from *Pines of Rome* and 'Circuses' from *Roman Festivals* seem a little inhibited, while the absence of organ during their climactic passages is an undeniable drawback.

Not least because it focuses on Respighi's less visceral side, Disc 2 is more satisfying overall. Admittedly the suites (from the turn of

the 20th century) find the composer struggling to wrest a personal idiom from an unlikely amalgam of Baroque forms and late-Romantic harmonies, though few would surely find fault with the eloquent 'Sarabanda' from the Suite for strings or sensuous 'Pastorale' from the Suite for strings and organ. La Vecchia secures eloquently wrought readings of both works and gives a fine account of *The Birds*, Respighi's most piquant instance of 'early music' (here Baroque harpsichord pieces) given a stylish and characterful makeover, above all the soulfulness of 'The Dove' that is one of the composer's most affecting realisations.

Presentation is 'no frills', as usual from Brilliant, yet there is little to fault in the spacious sound or extensive booklet-notes. Those interested in the 'Roman Triptych' have various options to choose from but those drawn to the other works or who are interested in a Respighi orchestral *intégrale* should certainly give this set a try. **Richard Whitehouse**

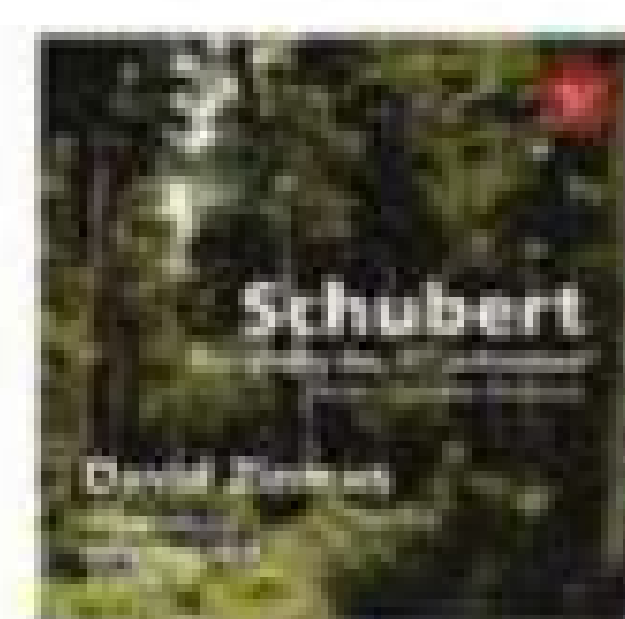
## Schubert

Symphony No 8, 'Unfinished', D759. Concertstück, D345<sup>a</sup>. Polonaise, D580<sup>a</sup>. Rondo, D438<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Andreas Janke *vr*

Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra / David Zinman

RCA Red Seal © 88697 95335-2 (52' • DDD)



### Zinman and his Zurich forces in new RCA Schubert cycle

Having given us the fleetest, leanest Beethoven modern-instrument symphony cycle on disc, usually with exhilarating results, David Zinman now bids fair to do the same for Schubert. The *Unfinished* is often viewed as the first great confessional Romantic symphony. Zinman, ever ready to turn tradition on its head, stresses its Classical lineage, outgunning even such period practitioners as Mackerras and Norrington (both Virgin, 2/99, 12/90) in athletic swiftness and textural transparency. The Zurichers' string sonority is slender without being desiccated, phrasing is crisp and clear-cut, with Schubert's accents sharply pointed. The first movement, more *agitato* than *moderato*, loses something in brooding intensity (none of the familiar broadening, for instance, in the apocalyptic *crescendo* at the start of the development), but unfolds with compelling logic and dramatic power. With no hint of rubato or dynamic inflection, the cellos' second theme is arguably too straight and chaste – though in Schubert one person's poetry is another's excess of Viennese *Gemütlichkeit*.

Chaste is also the watchword for the second movement, *con moto* with a vengeance, with ne'er a backward glance. Despite Zinman's meticulous observation of Schubert's *pp* and *ppp* dynamics, the coda's remote, dream-like harmonic shifts do not achieve quite the sense of transcendence I hear in the recordings by

Carlos Kleiber and Abbado (both DG, 12/85, 2/89). But Zinman's songful ease is certainly attractive. Little touches of ornamentation from first clarinet and first oboe – a feature of the conductor's Beethoven recordings – even add a hint of 18th-century playfulness.

Complementing Zinman's bracing *Unfinished* are three relative Schubertian rarities for violin and orchestra from 1816 and 1817: a chic, decidedly Viennese Polonaise and two more substantial pieces that, like so much of Schubert's music from these years, pay homage to his idol Mozart. To this delightful, unassuming music the Tonhalle's leader, Andreas Janke, brings a pure, sweet tone, deft phrasing and a crucial skittish innocence of spirit. **Richard Wigmore**

## Schumann • Mozart

Mozart Piano Concerto No 9, 'Jeunehomme', K271

Schumann Piano Concerto, Op 54

Sophie Pacini *pf* Rhineland Palatinate State

Philharmonic Orchestra / Radoslaw Szulc

Onyx © ONYX4088 (61' • DDD)

## Schumann

Piano Concerto, Op 54. Concert-Allegro with Introduction, Op 134. Introduction and Allegro appassionato, Op 92. Konzertstück for Piano and Orchestra, Op 86

Gerhard Oppitz *pf*

Bamberg Symphony Orchestra / Marc Andrae

Tudor © TUDOR7181 (77' • DDD/DSD)



### Schumann concertos from Germany coloured by enthusiasm and experience

Sophie Pacini (*b*1991) is a protégée of Martha Argerich and it shows – not only in her front-cover portrait but also in her performance of Schumann's Piano Concerto. There's a similar air of in-the-moment rhapsodising and no fear of giving the performance a boot up the backside if she catches her accompanists napping. Gerhard Oppitz, on the other hand, is approaching 60 and must have played the Schumann Concerto hundreds of times. Both, naturally, display admirable proficiency in the work. So why did I find my mind wandering in both performances?

Miss Pacini clearly has something to say in this music and the technique to do so. What is lacking, perhaps, is the ability to take the long view and tie up all the work's episodes into a unified whole. Oppitz, on the other hand, has the work so much under his fingers that it's as if nothing is a problem for him; the result is sleek without penetrating the surface. It's a magnificent show, to be sure, but not much more than that. Turning for comparison to Leif Ove Andsnes, one hears a pianist fully in control not only of the work's



fearsome technical demands but clear about where it's heading: whereas, for example, Oppitz's passagework in the finale is no more than that, in Andsnes's hands each run of quavers is inflected, not only to add interest to strings of equal notes but also to explicate the structure of the piece. He has far more characterful accompaniment, too, although perhaps it's unfair to measure the two provincial German bands under discussion against Berlin's finest under Mariss Jansons.

If you're tempted to try out either of these discs, the couplings will be an important consideration. Sophie Pacini strays off Argerich territory for Mozart's early concerto masterpiece, which seems more engaging than her Schumann. If the opening *Allegro* is a touch soft-grained, she relishes the playfulness of the final movement and distils a touching pathos not only in the breathtaking C minor *Andantino* but also in the *menuet triste* episode in the finale. Oppitz stays with Schumann for two rarities and a curio. If neither the Concert-Allegro with Introduction nor the Introduction and Allegro appassionato perhaps betrays the divine spark of genius that ignites the Concerto, they both contain killer tunes and colouristic touches that pooh-pooh lazy notions of Schumann's supposed orchestral incompetence: I was impressed by Florian Uhlig's recordings recently and this is a useful alternative. The remaining work is a piano transcription of the *Konzertstück* for four horns and may seem something of a disappointment to aficionados of the original version; nevertheless, it's good to have this oddity – the only other version I know is a rather more diffuse reading by Lev Vinocour. Perhaps it's their rarity value but Oppitz's performances of these pieces are more compelling than his Concerto: so, frustratingly, both discs are more desirable for their couplings than for the headline work. **David Thresher**

*Schumann Concerto – selected comparison:*

*Andsnes, BPO, Jansons (11/03<sup>8</sup>) (EMI) 503419-2*

*Opp 92 & 134 – selected comparison:*

*Uhlig, Deutsche Rad Philb, Poppen (3/11) (HANS) CD93 264*

*Konzertstück – selected comparison:*

*Vinocour, ORF Rad SO, Wildner (9/10) (RCA) 88697 65877-2*

## Stravinsky

**Stravinsky The Firebird. Greeting Prelude**

**Tchaikovsky/Stravinsky Pas de deux Sibelius/**

**Stravinsky Canzonetta, Op 62a Chopin/Stravinsky**

**Nocturne, Op 32 No 1. Grande Valse brillante, Op 18**

**Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra / Andrew Litton**

BIS ④ ⑤ BIS-SACD1874 (72' • DDD/DSD)



**More Ballets Russes  
from Litton in Bergen**

'Wastefully large', Stravinsky notoriously came to label his original orchestration of

*The Firebird* in the 1910 ballet recorded here, but by then he had a new agenda for preferring the suites he later prepared. It remains a magical score, both in the sense of embodying a fantastic fairy tale and as a piece of orchestral wizardry to bewitch the ear and the imagination. Andrew Litton allows it more delicacy than some of its later interpreters, to its great advantage at such moments as the very opening with the string harmonic *glissandos* and especially in the less familiar scenes between the more famous numbers; all of this is well caught by an attentive recording. If Kashchey has sounded more formidable in the hands of others (including the composer himself), Litton gives the old sorcerer a spectral quality that is at least as sinister. It is all beautifully played, not least thanks to a woodwind section of players who really listen to one another.

The fill-ups are a curious lot. The Tchaikovsky *Pas de deux* is affectionately faithful to the spirit of a composer Stravinsky loved dearly. The two Chopin arrangements were for performances of what became *Les Sylphides* and here the 'arranger' shoves his oar in with some rather showy accompaniments that had the desired effect of showing off to Diaghilev. The Sibelius Canzonetta is a real oddity, made in 1963 as acknowledgement of the Wihuri Sibelius Prize, set out for eight instruments (clarinets, horns, harp and bass) and sounding not much like either composer. As for the *Greeting Prelude*: this is the hilariously eccentric arrangement of 'Happy birthday to you' (originally for Pierre Monteux) with which orchestras liked to catch Stravinsky out if he happened to be conducting them on his own birthday and was expecting quite a different work when he brought his baton down. **John Warrack**

## Tchaikovsky

**Symphony No 1, 'Winter Daydreams', Op 13.**

**Marche slave, Op 31**

**Russian National Orchestra / Mikhail Pletnev**

Pentatone ④ ⑤ PTC5186 381 (55' • DDD/DSD)



**Another symphony from  
the RNO Tchaikovsky cycle**

The opening of the symphony is a very pointed example of what makes Pletnev both intriguing and irritating. Tchaikovsky's marking is *Allegro tranquillo* and the emergence of this conductor's 'Winter Daydreams' already suggests a very slow thaw indeed. So a sleepy and somewhat self-conscious opening tempo which then has to buck up its pace into the main *Allegro*. It does at least sound eminently balletic.

With the lovely second subject, Pletnev affords his mellifluous solo clarinet room enough to make a real meal of the melody. It's the same when the theme returns later (so at least he's consistent) – a lingering embrace

which might be affecting were the rubato not quite so cloying. Put simply, the sentiment is welcome, the execution is mannered to the point of awkwardness.

Tchaikovsky's wonderfully evocative slow movement, glimpsed through intensely misty air, fares so much better: a chilly beauty with ravishing solo oboe (what an orchestra this is) and limpid flute ornamentation. But again Pletnev's placement of the three string *tremolandos* heralding vista-opening horns is so pointed, indeed so laboured, as to draw unnecessary attention to the mechanics of the moment. Another instance of heightening awareness of the notes as opposed to the reasons for them.

The *Scherzo* liberally sprinkles old motherly Russian charm and the finale, with its balalaika-like *pizzicatos* and up-tempo rhythms, is suitably splashy and on the whole buoyant – barring one slightly scrappy passage in the fugal work-out. And, given what you have just read, it will not surprise you to learn that Pletnev makes the dark-to-light transition into the coda sound almost Brucknerian. The coda itself is too deliberate, too pompous – almost a dress-rehearsal for *Marche slave*, which certainly does the business and in turn sounds like a dress-rehearsal for the *1812*. Intriguing but way too mannered for me. **Edward Seckerson**

## Tchaikovsky

**Symphony No 5, Op 64.**

**The Queen of Spades – Overture**

**Cologne Gürzenich Orchestra / Dmitri Kitaenko**

Oehms Classics ④ ⑤ OC667 (54' • DDD/DSD)

## Tchaikovsky · Beethoven · Mozart



**Beethoven Egmont, Op 84 – Overture<sup>a</sup>**

**Mozart Serenade No 9, 'Posthorn', K320 – Minuet I<sup>b</sup>**

**Tchaikovsky Symphony No 5, Op 64<sup>a</sup>**

**Boston Symphony Orchestra / Erich Leinsdorf**

ICA Classics ④ ⑤ ICAD5059

(56' • NTSC • 4:3 • PCM stereo • 0)

Recorded at <sup>b</sup>Sanders Theatre, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, January 15, 1963; <sup>a</sup>Symphony Hall, Boston, April 15, 1969



**Tchaikovsky's Fifth new from Cologne  
and old from the Boston archives**

Dmitri Kitaenko's new Fifth may be a rather less wayward creature than his *Manfred* (A/10) but that doesn't necessarily make it any more enticing a proposition. Technically, this is an enormously impressive display: the Cologne orchestra responds with formidable discipline and sumptuous body of tone, while the eagle-eyed Kitaenko directs proceedings with an iron grip. It's all too slick and forceful, however, and I find myself craving far greater vulnerability,



compassion and tenderness. As soon as the decibels rise, the music takes on a hectoring quality that quickly becomes wearisome – in which respect Kitaenko's ruthlessly macho finale strikes me as a particular turn-off. To paraphrase Richard Osborne's comment from some years back about a certain high-profile Bruckner symphony recording (I've conveniently forgotten whose), it's the kind of performance that sounds loud even after you've switched it off.

Erich Leinsdorf's April 1969 Boston SO Fifth (a symphony he never recorded commercially) has already generated a bit of a stir in the classical blogosphere; now, having experienced this welcome restoration of WGBH TV's original (colour) telecast, I can fully understand why. The standard of playing is little short of sensational and Leinsdorf's actual interpretation, if not perhaps quite as sheerly lovable as Pierre Monteux's with the same band from a decade earlier (RCA, 11/94–nla), possesses prodigious energy, drama and sweep. Granted, the maestro's disconcertingly exaggerated podium manner takes some getting used to, but his authority is never in doubt. The closing pages shoot off like a rocket, Leinsdorf's audible exhortations merely intensifying the giddy rush of adrenalin. It's also a rare treat to view a number of legendary BSO principals – among them the flautist Doriot Anthony Dwyer and timpanist Everett ('Vic') Firth – at the top of their game.

As for the fill-ups, Kitaenko's inclusion of the overture to *The Queen of Spades* is little more than a makeweight. The ICA Classics DVD contains a sleek *Egmont* Overture from the same Symphony Hall concert as that of the symphony, as well as the first Minuet from Mozart's *Posthorn* Serenade in a performance from January 1963 at Harvard University's Sanders Theatre, this time with Leinsdorf *sans* baton and drawing some rich-toned, immaculately tailored playing from this aristocrat among orchestras. It should by now be abundantly clear as to which of these two releases will offer the greater lasting satisfaction.

Andrew Achenbach

## Vaughan Williams

Symphony No 2, 'A London Symphony'.

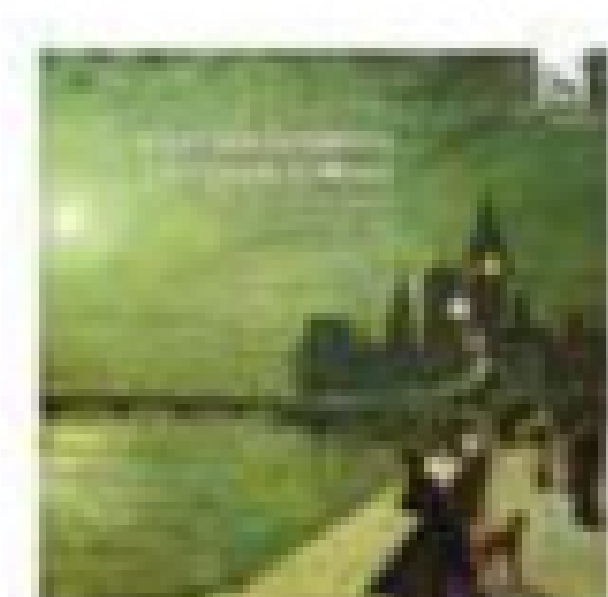
Serenade to Music<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Singers from Mercury Opera Rochester; Rochester

Philharmonic Orchestra / Christopher Seaman

Harmonia Mundi (F) HMU80 7567

(55' • DDD/DSD • T)



**The London Symphony for Seaman's Rochester finale**

Both performances emanate from the final concert in Christopher Seaman's final season (his 13th in all) as music director of the

Rochester Philharmonic – a real gala occasion, you'd imagine, especially given the inclusion of the *Serenade to Music* (Vaughan Williams's sublime 1938 tribute to Sir Henry Wood marking his 50th year as a conductor – and given here in its original guise with 16 solo singers).

All the more extraordinary, then, just how little sense of electricity there is to be found in the performance of the symphony. To be sure, Seaman draws some capable playing from his Rochester forces, though the strings are lacking something in tonal heft and allure (the unappealingly dry, close-set sound doesn't help either). The booklet reproduces a typically supportive letter to Seaman from Sir Adrian Boult, who found the younger conductor's February 1979 BBC broadcast of VW's *London* to be 'delightfully lively and right'. Sad to relate, any high hopes were quickly dashed, for the present curiously flaccid, disconcertingly lightweight display falls well short in terms of tension, temperament and poetry (the slow movement is especially disappointing). Or, to put it another way, the finished article pales next to the glories of, say, Sir Adrian's own blisteringly cogent 1952 account for Decca, let alone the inspirational Hallé/Barbirolli 1957 recording (available from the Barbirolli Society). If up-to-date sound is a must, go for Handley's idiomatic and characteristically selfless RLPO version (irresistible value on CFP).

I derived infinitely greater pleasure from Seaman's sensitive and shapely handling of the magical *Serenade to Music* (which boasts some characterful and ardent singing from members of Rochester's Mercury Opera Group) but it's simply not enough to rescue the disc as a whole. In a word, uncompetitive.

Andrew Achenbach

*London Sym – selected comparisons:*

LPO, Boult (9/52<sup>8</sup>) (DECC) 473 241-2DC5

Hallé, Barbirolli (2/59<sup>8</sup>) (BARB) SJB1021

RLPO, Handley (8/93) (CFP) 575309-2

## Verdi

'Complete Ballet Music from the Operas'

Ballet Music from *Aida*, *Don Carlo*, *Jérusalem*,

*Macbeth*, *Otello*, *Il trovatore* and *I vespri siciliani*

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra / José Serebrier

Naxos (S) 8 572818/19 (115' • DDD)



**Serebrier picks off Verdi's operatic ballet music**

There have been a number of collections of the ballets that Verdi wrote for Parisian productions of his operas. Notoriously, the members of the Jockey Club insisted on having a ballet in all the operas. Not only that, it had to be in Act 2 or later, so that they could finish their dinners before coming on to the opera. Verdi complied with the convention imposed

on him but we can deduce from this collection what members of the Jockey Club preferred. It comes out very clearly in the ballet music for Verdi's penultimate masterpiece, *Otello*. This bears little or no resemblance to the late style of the main opera but rather relates to the style of Verdi's early operas. Shrewdly, Serebrier makes this point right at the start by placing this five-minute piece first on disc 1. In that brief span, Verdi offers a sequence of tiny genre pieces with an oriental flavour.

Serebrier follows that with the three atmospheric numbers Verdi wrote for Act 3 of his much earlier Shakespearean opera, *Macbeth*, ending, not very appropriately, with pure rum-ti-tum band music. Far more ambitious is the set of four pieces he wrote for *Jérusalem*, his revision of what had originally appeared as *I Lombardi*: he used the same music but with different plot and characters. Next comes the long ballet scene for the original French version of *Don Carlos*, with its sections including some for solo cello and violin, all beautifully played here.

The second disc opens with the one exceptional ballet, that for *Aida*. This, of course, is much better known than any of the other items, though the seven genre pieces, mainly with a gypsy favour, that he wrote for Act 3 of *Il trovatore* do include a sudden reference to the Soldiers' Chorus in the fifth number. Last of all comes the most ambitious of all the ballets, the four substantial numbers representing the seasons of the year that Verdi wrote for *I vespri siciliani*.

As he has often shown in the past, José Serebrier has a remarkable gift for drawing polished and vigorous performances from his orchestra. The result has all the tension and bite of a live performance with the advantage of studio techniques, helped by refined and beautifully balanced recording, transparent in texture.

Edward Greenfield

## Wagner

Symphonies – WWV29; WWV35 (orch Mottl).

Huldigungsmarsch, WWV97. Rienzi – Overture.

Kaisermarsch, WWV104

Royal Scottish National Orchestra / Neeme Järvi

Chandos (F) CHSA5097 (79' • DDD/DSD)



**Järvi digs deep and early into the Wagner catalogue**

After four CDs placing Henk de Vlieger's egregious digests of the music dramas alongside other orchestral items, Neeme Järvi and the RSNO now dig even more deeply into the non-vocal parts of the Wagner catalogue – parts that might better be left undisturbed.

The Symphony in C (WWV29) from 1832 has some genuine historical interest, although this flexing of the 19-year-old's musical muscles



# GLORIOUS BEETHOVEN



Beethoven's unusual cantata *Der glorreiche Augenblick* is filled with patriotic praise for Vienna and tributes to the kings and princes of Europe after the defeat of Napoleon.

This remarkable and distinctive piece is rarely performed and seldom recorded, and its appearance on Naxos with such distinguished forces as the RPO and Hilary Davan Wetton makes it an obvious choice for seekers of fresh Beethoven material.

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For more details please go to [www.classicsonline.com](http://www.classicsonline.com)

# MAGNIFICENT BARTÓK



Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra* is one of his greatest works, and a brilliant display vehicle for the instrumental virtuosity of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra.

Acclaimed conductor Marin Alsop has an impressive Bartók pedigree: "Alsop's structural command of [Bartók's music] is absolute, her transitions confident and dramatic." *Independent on Sunday*



is closer to the easy-going Weber than to the fiery Beethoven whom Wagner hoped to emulate. Only the second movement, an *Andante* which is more like a march in triple time than a lyric interlude, offers a few anticipations of the future master of music drama for those with ears to hear. The fragment of a Symphony in E major, unorchestrated and unfinished in 1834, survives in a version made after Wagner's death by Felix Mottl. This only resurfaced a century later, in the 1980s, and serves to confirm that the young Wagner was better at going through the symphonic motions than breaking the mould in the way he would later do with opera.

Opera is represented here by the *Rienzi* overture – music rich in character and incident, and well articulated in this performance, even though tempi seem overly deliberate for much of the time. As for the *Huldigungsmarsch* (1864) and *Kaisermarsch* (1871), you'd have to go a long way to find worse compositions by a truly great composer than these. But Järvi and the RSNO don't skimp on the music's surging bombast and the Chandos sound has abundant character: great depth of perspective and no loss of clarity.

Arnold Whittall

## 'Arcadia Lost'

Britten *Sinfonia da Requiem*<sup>a</sup>

Vaughan Williams *Flos campi*<sup>b</sup>.

The Lark Ascending<sup>c</sup>. On *Wenlock Edge*<sup>d</sup>

<sup>d</sup>Steve Davislim *ten* <sup>c</sup>Michael Dauth *vn* <sup>b</sup>Roger

Benedict *va* <sup>d</sup>Benjamin Martin *pf* <sup>b</sup>Cantillation;

<sup>d</sup>Hamer Quartet; <sup>abc</sup>Sydney Symphony Orchestra /

Mark Wigglesworth

Melba © MR301131 (74' • DDD/DSD • T)

Recorded live at <sup>abc</sup>Sydney Opera House, October 1-3,

2009; <sup>d</sup>Iwaki Auditorium, February 28, 2010



Wigglesworth with English masterworks in Australia

A concept album which may or may not suit the dedicated collector but is certainly worth trying. Melba's packaging includes notes from no less an authority than Michael Kennedy and the designer artwork is apposite and evocative. The remarkably clean surround sound is also a credit to the label.

A year early for the Britten centenary, the *Sinfonia da Requiem* looks like an interloper here yet earns its place as both private memorial and a reaction to the developing menace of war. Performance-wise it is arguably the highlight of the disc. Cool at first (if one is used to Barbirolli, Previn or Britten himself in this music), Wigglesworth avoids subjective rhetorical attack in favour of a patient brooding quality that allows for exceptionally lucid textures.

The Vaughan Williams instrumentals are placed first. Were it not for the recent



An upbeat down under: Mark Wigglesworth conducts the Sydney Symphony

appearance of the Lawrence Power/Martyn Brabbins *Flos campi* (Hyperion, 12/11), this one might have soared to the top of the list. The choral contribution is more forthright in Sydney than in Cardiff, only partly a matter of the recording balance. Wigglesworth has never been one to gild the lily and everything feels tauter. In the ubiquitous *Lark* he distils the magic rather too literally for my taste. While the outer sections are paced slowly enough to avoid the sleekness imparted by certain celebrity soloists, there isn't much in the way of mystical transcendence. Or was it just that I was distracted by extraneous audience noise?

*On Wenlock Edge* was recorded in a different venue and is not, as you might reasonably have been expecting, performed in its orchestral version. It is good to hear a score like this sung without the distraction of exaggeratedly English vowels, even if Steve Davislim's poised and virile delivery lacks the earthiness and insight that marks out Bryn Terfel's *Songs of Travel*. Davislim gets a word wrong in the fourth verse of his first song but this is a stylish account of music too easily pigeonholed or taken for granted.

David Gutman

## 'Friedrich der Grosse'

'Music for the Berlin Court'

CPE Bach Symphony No 1, Wq183/1 Frederick II

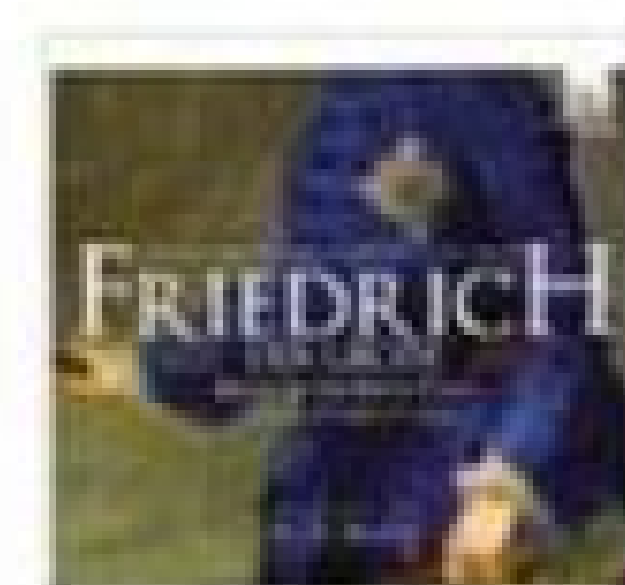
Sonata for Flute and Bass JG Graun Overture and

Allegro, GWV A/XI/2. Viola da gamba Concerto,

GWV A/XIII/14 Nichelmann Harpsichord Concerto

Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin

Harmonia Mundi © HMC90 2132 (74' • DDD)



Frederick the Great's court profiled by the Akademie

The booklet-notes for this release cite the term 'Berlin Classicism' for the school of talented

composers working at the court of Frederick the Great, the point being that they represent not some failed branch of the 'Viennese Classicism' of Haydn and Mozart – seemingly still the goal which most music of the mid-18th century is assumed to have aimed for – but a distinct musical culture of their own. There certainly is a family resemblance among the works presented here: the formal experimentalism, nervous driving energy and restless spirit that are usually associated with CPE Bach are also on this evidence characteristic of JG Graun, Christoph Nichelmann and Frederick himself.

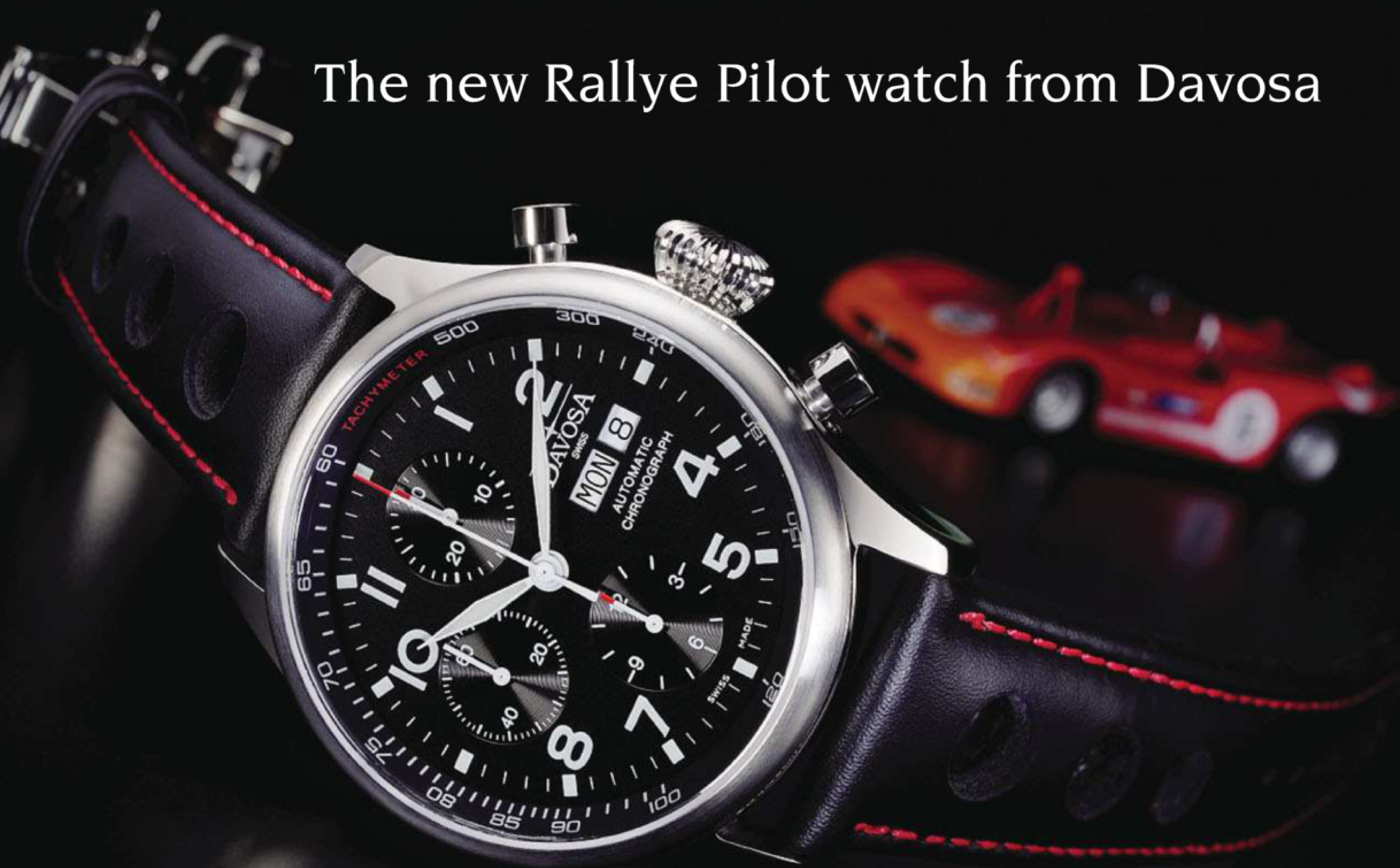
Graun is the oldest of them, his music the most Baroque in flavour – the French-style Overture and concerto-like *Allegro* especially, but also the strong-boned Concerto for viola da gamba. Frederick's Flute Sonata (one of over 120) is oddly cast as a recitative-cum-arioso followed by a polite *allegro* and a fugal-style finale, all lent expressive warmth here by the choice of fortepiano as continuo accompanist; and the fortepiano likewise brings added depth to a Keyboard Concerto by Christoph Nichelmann built on CPE Bach-like lines but lyrically and harmonically smoother, especially in the velvety central *Adagio*. Next to these, the inclusion of one of Bach's brilliant 'Hamburg' symphonies seems a little perverse – its sense of exuberant release is usually attributed to his relief at escaping Berlin servitude.

There is no need to say much about the Berlin Akademie für Alte Musik's performances; they show all the urgent intent, vibrant sound and expert ensemble playing we have come to expect from them. What better outfit could there be to celebrate Frederick's 300th anniversary year, and what better repertoire to mark their own 30 years together? Let us hope for at least 30 more.

Lindsay Kemp



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## 'The Galileo Project'

DVD

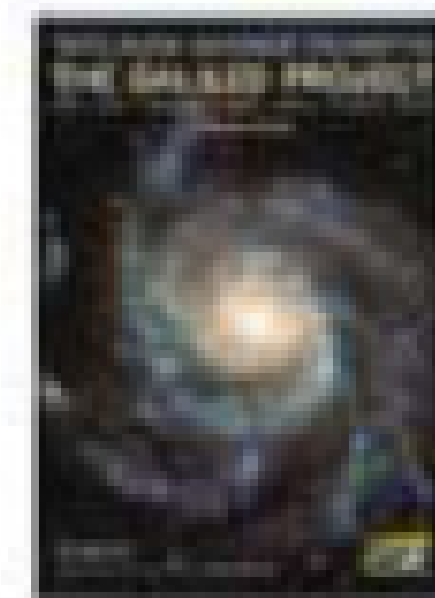
Excerpts from orchestral works and operas by  
**JS Bach, Galilei, Handel, Lully, Marini, Merula,  
Monteverdi, Purcell, Rameau, Telemann, Vivaldi,  
Weiss and Zelenka**

Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra

Tafelmusik Media ② (CD+ DVD)

TMK1001DVDCD (57' + 87' • DDD • NTSC •

4:3 • PCM stereo • 0)



**Tafelmusik release audio-visual  
project on own-label DVD**

New and imaginative ways of programming Baroque repertoire that was never intended for the modern concert or CD formats are always welcome and Tafelmusik have found a corker here. Inspired by the 400th anniversary of Galileo first using his telescope, the Canadian orchestra's double-bassist Alison McKay has devised an hour-long 'Harmony of the Spheres' sequence which unpretentiously harnesses music by several Baroque greats with readings from Shakespeare, Ovid, Kepler and Galileo, and descriptions of Isaac Newton and the opulent Festival of the Planets mounted for a Dresden royal wedding in 1719. The whole is given in front of a suspended circle on to which astronomical images are projected, and the performers move around on a similarly patterned floor, playing from memory, intermingling and reforming (almost everyone gets a solo) amid changing lighting effects. The fascination of this for general viewers is in a resonant linking of the preoccupations and of 17th- and 18th-century music and culture with the radical scientific discoveries of the time, while for lovers of Baroque music there is a simpler joy in hearing familiar music in new contexts and orderings, and fun in waiting to hear what comes next.

Further pleasure comes from the playing of Tafelmusik, an uplifting mixture as ever of ensemble excellence and open generosity of spirit. Shaun Smyth's readings are clear and committed, though British viewers will wince at the 'English' accent (half Doncaster, half Dundee?) that he concocts for the Newton section. The music is pre-recorded but not so obviously as to prevent visual suspension of belief, even when you have realised that such a mobile performance (matched by the camera angles and video editing) could hardly have allowed so good a balance. This must have made a great show live – it has already toured to China, Australasia and Central America – and it makes a pretty enjoyable DVD. A CD version, without readings, is also included.

**Lindsay Kemp**



Music of the Spheres: Tafelmusik in The Galileo Project

## 'Music from the Machine Age'

**Bartók** The Miraculous Mandarin, Op 19 - Suite

**Holst** The Perfect Fool **Prokofiev** Scythian Suite,

Op 20 **Ravel** La valse **Schulhoff** Ogelala - Suite

**Borusan Istanbul Philharmonic Orchestra /**

**Sascha Goetzel**

Onyx ② ONYX4086 (80' • DDD)



**Concept album No 2 from  
Goetzel's Istanbul orchestra**

There's something uniquely exciting about hearing a keen young orchestra devouring difficult but exciting music whole, which is precisely what the Borusan Istanbul Philharmonic does here. Their principal conductor, Viennese-born Sascha Goetzel, has enough imagination to release the mystery of this 'Music for the Machine Age' (much of it from the 1920s), especially valuable in, for example, the 'Night' movement of Prokofiev's *Scythian Suite*. As to the rhythmic element, just cue 0'53" into the second movement of the Prokofiev and hear how the strings savage their kicking syncopations.

The programme is very enterprising, Schulhoff's exotic, post-Bartókian *Ogelala* Suite proving an ideal introduction to the work of a gifted master who ended his days in a Nazi concentration camp. Bartók's gutsy *Miraculous Mandarin* Suite notches up a level or two of

extra tension, the 'Decoy Games' heavily seductive, the Mandarin's ascent to the girl's seedy abode purposeful and threatening, his arrival appropriately shocking. The lead-up to 'The Chase' plays on the music's erotic aspect, whereas 'The Chase' itself bounds in on pounding percussion, the strings thrusting their quasi-fugue at us with impressive force.

The arrival of *The Perfect Fool* might catch you a little off your guard (the musical language hasn't quite the same darkly visceral impact as the other pieces programmed), but Holst certainly stands his musical ground and the performance is compelling. I'm not quite so sure about Ravel's *La valse*, which ends the programme and drags its feet rather, though the final pages suddenly turn up the heat – and the tempo.

Most of the orchestral playing delivers in spades and the sound quality is very good too, if occasionally wanting in inner detail. So, taken as a whole, this is an exciting CD (the orchestra's second for Onyx) that deserves the widest currency and that would provide a first-rate introduction to concert music for those, primarily youngsters, who habitually shy away from 'classical' music because they imagine that most of the repertoire is aimed at making them relax. Here the motto is most definitely 'none shall sleep'!

**Rob Cowan**



# Chamber



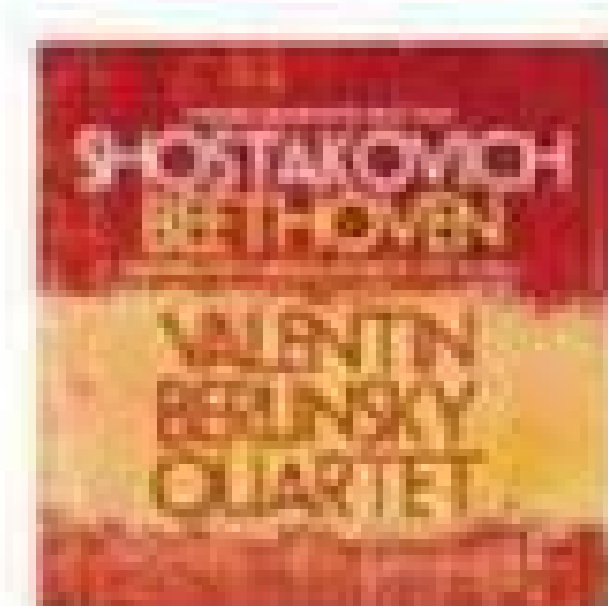
David Gutman reviews  
Dohnányi from the Aviv Quartet:  
*'The Third Quartet's discourse remains  
obstinately academic, the ideas less impressive  
than their working out'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 58**



Caroline Gill reviews Glazunov  
from the Zemlinsky Quartet:  
*'There is still an elder-statesman feel to this  
repertoire that brings it a welcome gravitas  
in a period of change'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 59**

## Beethoven • Shostakovich

Beethoven String Quartet No 7, Op 59 No 1  
Shostakovich String Quartets - No 7, Op 108;  
No 8, Op 110  
Valentin Berlinsky Quartet  
Avie Ⓢ AV2253 (74' • DDD)



Start of a paired-composer  
cycle from Swiss quartet

While the composer himself was reluctant to break faith with the technically less proficient Beethoven Quartet, concert-goers and record buyers of a certain age have found it difficult to 'move on' from the Shostakovich performances given by the variously configured Borodin Quartet. The longest-serving member of that matchless ensemble, clocking up more than six decades of continuous service, was the cellist Valentin Berlinsky. At first sight it might seem a little odd that his pianist daughter has given her blessing to the appropriation of his name by a Swiss-based group founded in 2010. As section leaders with Zurich's major musical institutions, its members – Polish, Chinese, British and Russian – have served under conductors with quite different notions of authenticity. Here, though, one registers a conscious effort to reassert the importance of warmth, blend and polish. The spacious recording is entirely in keeping with these old-school priorities. Focus and refinement may slip a little in the face of the implosive ferocity of the Seventh's finale but there is little to criticise and much to admire.

The inviting, singing tone of the Beethoven is yet more striking, an unexpected coupling set to usher in a whole series pairing these two composers on the Avie label. There are representative concert videos of these musicians playing separately and together online so you really can try before you buy. The sonic quality available there is of course no match for the sweet sounds of a disc that comes with concise booklet-notes from David Fanning.

Recommended. **David Gutman**

## G Berg

Tronqué. Tøbrud (Thaw). '...pour violon et piano'.  
'...pour deux violoncelles et piano' (2nd version).  
Prosthesis. Pièce

Signe Asmussen *mez* Kenneth Larsen *bcl* Torben  
Snekkestad *sax* Per Morten Bye *tpt* Signe Madsen,  
Arne Balk-Møller *vns* John Ehde, Niels Ullner *vcs*  
Erik Kaltoft *pf* Søren Monrad *marl*  
Dacapo Open Space Ⓢ 8 226547 (61' • DDD)



Chamber works by  
Denmark's serialist pioneer

Gunnar Berg (1909-89) was a proponent of total serialism, apparently the first in Denmark, who unsurprisingly attended Messiaen's composition classes and the Darmstadt summer school but returned to his home country between 1957 and 1980 to write and perform music that has largely been ignored: the excellent notes reveal that several of these pieces received first performances a decade and more after their composition. Three previous releases on Dacapo have gruffly disclosed a determinedly singular voice – 'lyrically introverted', says Jens Rossel in *Grove* – at its most bravura and engaging in a series of 13 *Eclatements* written throughout his career and four 'concertos' for piano and orchestra composed for his French pianist wife to play.

On this disc of chamber music, the choice of running order, in reverse chronology, perhaps reflects Berg's own uncompromising nature. Only after a while did I discover that if I played the tracks back to front, as it were, I could start to unpick and take pleasure from what is by any standards an austere personal aesthetic. We might expect chamber music to disclose multiple personalities, or facets of that voice, but the restless iteration and periodic exchange of ideas creates a paradoxical and sometimes (especially the pieces for violin and cellos with piano) self-defeating unanimity of thought. The melodic contours rather defy you to grasp their shape but, like a mid-Atlantic wave, they are full of potential energy, their origin and direction being harder to plot.

The mood of each work is governed less by the notes than their instrumentation. The jazzy counterpoint of the 1949 *Pièce* for trumpet, violin and piano is answered by unmistakably bluesy saxophone slides in *Prosthesis* (1954). Liberation arrives with the vocal line in *Tøbrud* ('Thaw', 1961), a setting of the poet Ivan Malinovski (a Danish René Char in idiom),

which is the only music here that doesn't sound composed at the piano. Finally, the elements of *Tronqué* (1964) may or may not be less predetermined (I haven't seen the scores), but their interplay and points of rest at least suggest some more relaxed accommodation between principles and technique. Dacapo may have had a point in saving the best until first.

Peter Quantrill

## Brahms

Two Viola Sonatas, Op 120

Henninge Landaas *va* Tim Horton *pf*  
LAWO Classics Ⓢ LWC1027 (46' • DDD)



Brahms sonatas with the  
Vertavo quartet violinist

The Op 120 Sonatas, in their viola-and-piano guise (Brahms originally wrote them for clarinet, later adapting the part to suit the viola), have recently been fortunate in the recording studio. Lawrence Power and Simon Crawford-Phillips are energetic and passionate, Rachel Roberts and Lars Vogt more freely expressive, while Henninge Landaas and Tim Horton's performances, adopting broader tempi, stress the autumnal character of these late works. Landaas produces an exceptionally fine sound, her tone beautifully centred, her vibrato arising naturally from expressiveness initiated by the bow. Tim Horton's booklet-notes offer a fascinating comparison of the clarinet and viola versions, centring on the different effect on the two instruments of Brahms's *legato* phrases, and both players project these phrases most convincingly. In addition, Horton is adept at balancing chords so that the thickest textures sound rich, never turgid.

The leisurely approach has some drawbacks: the lyrical episodes in the Second Sonata's first *Allegro* seem too inclined to linger and the corresponding movement in the First Sonata sometimes sounds elegiac rather than *appassionato* as marked. But the graceful quality of this sonata's third movement is captured perfectly and, indeed, in every movement of the two sonatas we hear passages that are especially revealing and beautiful.

My most enthusiastic recommendation, however, remains the Roberts/Vogt disc, not





Henninge Landaas and Tim Horton recording Brahms at Sofienberg Church, Oslo

only for its fine balance between energy and reflection and for Lars Vogt's particularly memorable playing, but also because the disc includes a splendid account of Schumann's *Märchenbilder*. The new CD can still be recommended, though, for its persuasive alternative view.

**Duncan Druce**

*Selected comparisons – coupled as above:*

*Power, Crawford-Phillips (S/O7) (HYPE) CDA67584*

*Roberts, Vogt (AVI) AVI8553181*

## F Couperin • Rebel

**F Couperin** *Le Parnasse, ou L'apothéose de Corelli. L'apothéose de Lully* **Rebel** *Le tombeau de Monsieur Lully*

**Ricercar Consort / Philippe Pierlot** with

**François Morel** *narr*

Mirare © MIR150 (67' • DDD)



**Pierlot with Couperin's celebration of national style**

It is a neat idea to bring together Couperin's complementary celebrations of the competing national styles of the mid-Baroque, two free-form works for trio sonata forces which depict the entries into Parnassus of, respectively, Lully representing the French and Corelli the Italians. Couperin's desire was always to meld the styles in a *goût réuni*, and nowhere is his intent more generously demonstrated than in

the *Apothéose de Lully*, in which Corelli and Lully are represented duetting on violins, each in his own manner as well as that of the other. Thus, despite feeling the need to string the works through with explanatory subtitles, Couperin is seeking essentially musical means to achieve his programmatic purpose, ingeniously and fascinatingly throwing extra emphasis on the very subject at hand.

The problem as far as listening goes is that both works are inevitably made up of several short sections and consequently struggle to build momentum. These performances have an actor reading out the French movement subtitles as well, which breaks things up even more and will surely irritate on repeated listening (with the booklet to hand they are not even necessary). The Ricercar Consort have perhaps been affected by this, for refined and accomplished as their playing undoubtedly is – the strings are clean and vibrant, the continuo gently sympathetic – the interpretations are a little low-key, seemingly uncertain whether to adopt the theatrical approach or to immerse themselves more in the music's typically Couperinesque warm beauty. The sweet addition of flutes to the mix in the *Apothéose de Lully* improves things in the latter regard but some movements are still a touch earthbound, considering the subject. An alert sense of rhetoric is evident in Rebel's *Tombeau de Monsieur Lully*, which separates the two

Couperin pieces, but overall this is a disc one wishes could engage more. **Lindsay Kemp**

## Dawes

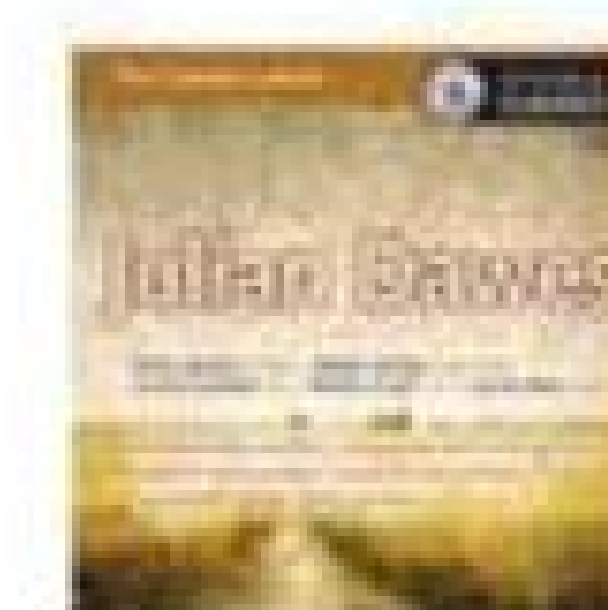
Cello Sonata<sup>a</sup>. Clarinet Sonatina<sup>b</sup>. Elegie<sup>c</sup>.

Horn Sonatina<sup>d</sup>. Violin Sonata<sup>c</sup>

<sup>b</sup>Emma Johnson *cl* <sup>d</sup>Stephen Stirling *hn* <sup>c</sup>Matthew

Trusler *vn* <sup>a</sup>Gemma Rosefield *vc* <sup>pf</sup>Gordon Back

Omnibus Classics © CC5004 (62' • DDD)



**Renowned artists gather for Julian Dawes portrait**

Independent labels are invaluable for promoting lesser known composers, as Omnibus Classics does here for Julian Dawes. Dawes, in his late sixties, has written extensively for the theatre along with numerous song-cycles, and instrumental works such as those featured here. Both string sonatas are of comparable length: the Violin Sonata (2006) encloses a rhapsodic *Larghetto* within movements of no mean motivic resource and rhythmic incisiveness, whereas the Cello Sonata (2007) resorts to four movements – an intricately wrought *Allegro* and soulfully expressive *Adagio* being followed by a deftly inflected *Scherzo*, though the finale feels just a little perfunctory in this context. As to the sonatinas, that for horn (2001) complements its declamatory and tensile outer movements with an affecting *Largo*, while that





Foerster in flower: the Janáček Trio

for clarinet (1994) breezily uses jazz idioms in those on either side of the deceptively unassuming *Lento* (not least in its elegant palindromic structure) at its centre.

*Elegie* (1988) is the most extended single movement and also the most emotionally involving. A tribute to the composer's mother, who died only months after his birth, this focuses on an expansive violin melody whose impassioned evolution is offset by a more restless interlude and then rounded off by a calm while ambivalent coda. All five works receive performances of real distinction, not surprising given the calibre of musicians involved, and have been recorded with unobtrusive clarity and rightness as regards the balance between solo instruments and piano. Detailed as well as insightful booklet-notes, and a disc well deserving investigation.

Richard Whitehouse

## Debussy

String Quartet, Op 10. Danse sacrée et danse profane<sup>a</sup>. Piano Trio<sup>b</sup>. *Rêverie* (arr P Cassidy)

**Brodsky Quartet** with <sup>a</sup>Sioned Williams *hp* <sup>a</sup>Chris Laurence *db* <sup>b</sup>Jean-Efflam Bavouzet *pf*  
Chandos © CHAN10717 (65' • DDD)

## 'Petit-fours'

**Debussy** Beau soir **Dvořák** Humoresques, Op 101 B187 - No 7 **Elgar** La capricieuse, Op 17. Chanson de matin, Op 15 No 2. Chanson de nuit, Op 15 No 1 **Falla** Siete canciones populares españolas - No 5, Nana; No 7, Polo **Godowsky** Alt-Wien **Kreisler** Caprice viennois, Op 2<sup>a</sup> **Mendelssohn** On Wings of Song, Op 34 No 2 **Prokofiev** The Love for Three Oranges - March **Ravel** Valses nobles et sentimentales - No 6. Violin Sonata - 2nd movt, Blues **Sarasate** Danzas españolas, Op 23 - No 1, Playera; No 2, Zapateado

**Schumann** Album für die Jugend, Op 68 - No 30. Kinderszenen, Op 15<sup>b</sup> - No 1, Von fremden Ländern und Menschen; No 2, Kuriose Geschichte; No 7, Träumerei **Shostakovich** Five Duets - Prelude; Suite for Variety Orchestra - Waltz No 2<sup>b</sup>  
**Brodsky Quartet** with <sup>a</sup>Robert Smissen *va* <sup>b</sup>Philip Edward Fisher *pf*  
Chandos © CHAN10708 (66' • DDD)



## New to Chandos, the Brodsky Quartet with Debussy and sweetmeat miniatures

Here are the first fruits of the Brodsky Quartet's 40th-anniversary alliance with Chandos: an original and revealing Debussy coupling and a collection of encores with a difference. The Debussy coupling defies all rivals. Where usually the popular String Quartet and the youthful Piano Trio, written when the composer was only 17, are generally yoked with works involving similar forces, this one gives a special insight into the composer.

The disc opens with the String Quartet in an exceptionally warm and sympathetic reading, with flexible *rubato* giving the impression of performers in love with the music, and continues with the Piano Trio. This may be a lightweight work but it is a remarkable example of the young composer's skill. The Brodsky Quartet call on Jean-Efflam Bavouzet to join them in making clear that, though the teenage Debussy had not fully developed his distinctive style, it is far more than simply a derivative work. Though there are many influences in the first movement, notably from Delibes, there are hints of the highly original composer to come, and the *pizzicato* writing and jaunty anapaestic

rhythms of the second movement show a remarkable gift for fresh invention.

The *Deux Danses* of 1904, written for the short-lived chromatic harp, are here transcribed for the conventional pedal harp with the addition of a double bass to the ensemble, and the disc closes with an effective transcription by the quartet's viola player, Paul Cassidy, of the piano *Rêverie*. Altogether a satisfying and unique Debussy coupling, superbly played.

'Petits-fours' is just as cleverly devised: where most such collections offer a mixed bag for you to select at will, this one offers a satisfying sequence when played end to end. The opening brings a Spanish section, followed by three Elgar items. That in turn leads nicely into one of Dvořák's popular *Humoresques*, deliciously pointed. Mendelssohn's 'On Wings of Song' leads into Godowsky's *Alt-Wien*, totally charming. Three of Schumann's *Kinderszenen* with piano (Philip Edward Fisher) lead into the seventh of Ravel's *Valses nobles et sentimentales*, before an arrangement of the 'Blues' movement from Ravel's Violin Sonata, totally idiomatic in its pointing. Cunningly, the sequence ends with one of the gentlest numbers, Debussy's song 'Beau soir'. Cassidy is again responsible for most of the arrangements in the sequence.

What is so striking about the playing of the Brodsky Quartet throughout is their brimming love for the music, with some ravishing shading down to the most hushed *pianissimos*. All this is caught in wonderfully rich and transparent sound, a credit to the Chandos engineers.

Edward Greenfield

## Dohnányi

String Quartets - No 1, Op 7; No 3, Op 33

**Aviv Quartet**

Naxos © 8 572569 (57' • DDD)



## Israeli ensemble with the outer string quartets of Dohnányi

It is 50 years since Dohnányi's *Variations on a Nursery Song* for piano and orchestra was heard frequently in concert and longer than that since the composer lost his pre-eminent position in Hungarian national culture for reasons both political and stylistic. With émigré figures like Rachmaninov and Korngold back in the limelight, the time would seem ripe for a wider reassessment of a musical craftsman, keyboard virtuoso, academician and administrator. Indeed, several record companies currently exhibit just such an agenda. The importance of this latest contribution is not so much its novelty – the Third Quartet of 1926 was set down by the Hollywood String Quartet (Testament, 8/55<sup>R</sup>) and has been revisited several times in recent years – but its accessibility and its price-point.

Placed second by the Aviv Quartet, which in 2010 boasted a Russian/Israeli, Belgian/Israeli



and Canadian line-up, the First String Quartet comes across as the work of an astonishingly assured but stylistically unadventurous student, taking its cue from Brahms and even Mendelssohn. Only the slow third movement hints at a more chromatic albeit decidedly Austro-German future. The Third Quartet is a relatively concise effort that dispenses with the traditional *scherzo* movement in favour of greater rhythmic and harmonic interest throughout. That said, its discourse remains obstinately academic, the melodic ideas less impressive than their working out. There is some grit in the argumentative first movement but neither the mostly meditative *Andante* nor the more bracing charms of the finale suggest much in the way of a truly original voice. Need that matter? This is writing that conveys not very much but does so with civility. The youngish players, decently recorded in a Toronto church, supply warmth and a certain generalised cut and thrust but little or no paprika. The notes by Richard Whitehouse manage to find more intensity and incident in the music than I did. Perhaps you will too.

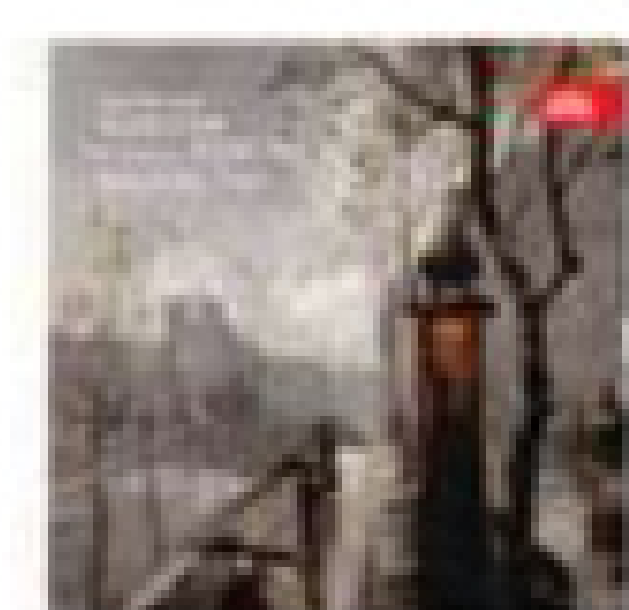
David Gutman

## Foerster

Piano Trios – No 1, Op 8; No 2, Op 38; No 3, Op 105

Janáček Trio

Supraphon Ⓢ SU4079-2 (75' • DDD)



### All the Foerster piano trios taped in Prague

Having already given us excellent versions of Josef Bohuslav Foerster's string quartets and violin concertos (10/08), Supraphon now treats us to three fine works that are separated by no less than 40 years. Both the First (1883) and Second Piano Trios are reminiscent of Grieg (the First was dedicated to him and earned its composer an enthusiastic response), but it's the Second that shines a brighter light on an individual talent, with the predictable shadow of Smetana casting its presence principally through a strain of tragedy that infiltrates the slow finale. Foerster had recently lost his sister Marie, just as Smetana had lost his daughter prior to writing his Trio. The second movement also admits certain Brahmsian elements – particularly in the piano-writing – but there's little doubt that by 1894 Foerster had found his own voice and was using it well.

Twenty-eight years later he penned his Third and last trio, an often craggy work that he dedicated to a friend who was also founder of the local Smetana Society in Jičín. By then the Romantic aspect of Foerster's style was vying with a more cerebral element, though the emotional peaks and troughs of the slow movement recall parallel episodes in the earlier trios. It's an accomplished piece but were I to single out one trio for inclusion in an all-Czech

programme (alongside, say, Dvořák and Smetana), it would be the Second, a significant achievement that deserves wider currency. The Janáček Trio offer committed, well-judged performances, though the leader's intonation slips momentarily towards the close of the Third Trio. The recorded sound is extremely well balanced.

Rob Cowan

## Glazunov

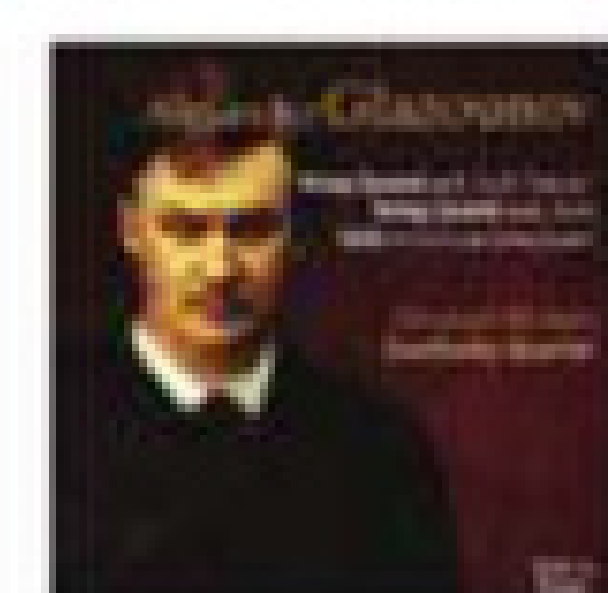
String Quartets – No 3, 'Slavonic', Op 26;

No 4, Op 64. *Idyll*<sup>a</sup>

Zemlinsky Quartet with <sup>a</sup>Christoph Ess *h*n

Praga Digitals Ⓢ PRD/DSD250 281

(69' • DDD/DSD)



### Czech ensemble with the pastoral side of Glazunov

That Glazunov's chamber music is often dismissed as old-fashioned isn't necessarily a bad thing and although, as their teacher, Prokofiev and Stravinsky hectored him, there is still an elder-statesman feel to this repertoire that brings it a welcome gravitas in a period of great change.

The Third String Quartet is more a set of dances – Glazunov's obsession with folk music pervades all the pieces on this disc – that sound almost English in their pastoral personality, despite its nickname of *Slavonic* (an appealing quality that bleeds into the disc's central *Idyll* for horn, played with great gentleness and calm by Christoph Ess, principal horn of the Bamberg orchestra). Its lilting character is reflected in its loose structure, the Zemlinskys appreciating this by taking a more playful tack than they do with its sterner sister, No 4.

Fundamentally, though, there is an undeniable lack of virtuosity in these pieces that can leave them a bit out in the artistic cold. The Zemlinskys play them perfectly for what they are, welcoming their harmonic inevitabilities as positive rather than a let-down when the music has built up to a hiatus and taken – as it often does – a frustratingly anodyne turn. They add a dimension that could easily be lacking in other hands, although this leads to the unfortunate by-product that hearing them played with such poise and accomplished ensemble tends to sound a bit incongruous. Nevertheless, they quite rightly treat it with a lightness best saved for Mendelssohn or Pleyel, rather than the lugubrious, transitive Russian music it is not.

Caroline Gill

## Langgaard

'String Quartets, Vol 1'

String Quartets – No 2; No 3; No 6.

Variations on 'Mig hjertelig nu længes', BVN71

Nightingale Quartet

Dacapo Ⓢ 6 220575 (70' • DDD/DSD)



# TUNE SURFING

## The world of classical music apps

If you've joined the global millions who have succumbed to the allure of an iPhone or iPad, then the world of apps will be yet another call on your time. I've been spending time sampling some of the free classical music-related apps out there, and here are some of my favourites. First up, a quick reminder that *Gramophone* is available as an app and is already attracting quite a following: in iPad format it's easy to use and you can follow any URL out of the page. For more information, just visit *Gramophone's* website ([gramophone.co.uk](http://gramophone.co.uk)).

One very useful app, an upgrade from the website, is **Bachtrack**, (see below) which allows you to search for concerts. Simply choose between 'What' (composer), 'Where', 'Who' or 'When' and you can view the listings for that venue/artist/date. It



works very well and you can even choose to search by location, so if you find yourself away from home and in need of music, it couldn't be simpler.

A number of orchestras and performing organisations have apps that are invariably pretty simple but quite effective: check out the **London Philharmonic**, **Chicago Symphony** and **Royal Opera House** websites. They're all quite good at linking through for ticket purchase (though expect this to be a short cut for those hard-to-get opera tickets at Covent Garden when booking opens).

A number of radio stations have good apps, and don't overlook the **BBC iPlayer**, which allows you to listen again for seven days following the initial broadcast (it's best to be using a Wi-Fi connection) – and, of course, Radio 3's output can be found here. One of the US's leading classical stations, Boston's **WGBH**, offers a simple streaming service and has an imaginative playlist. Minnesota Public Radio (**MPR**), another of the US's best, is also worth downloading: it has a gimmick-free drivetime programme which winds up being a lunchtime show in Europe. Don't forget Los Angeles's **KUSC**, home of the eloquent and knowledgeable Jim Svejda: this is classical radio at its best – intelligent, uncluttered and unpatronising, and you rarely encounter 'bleeding chunks'.

There are various fan sites of differing appeal: Gustavo Dudamel has one (**Bravo Gustavo**) that allows you to conduct along with your iPhone or iPad in your hand (I didn't get too far into Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* for fear of sending my iPad flying). The site for **Thomas Hampson** is, needless to say, tasteful and stylish, basically a home for his blog – and, as he's an intelligent guy, it's well worth a detour. **James Jolly**



# ONDINE *New releases*

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"David Aaron Carpenter is a violist to watch" *The Strad*

ODE 1193-2

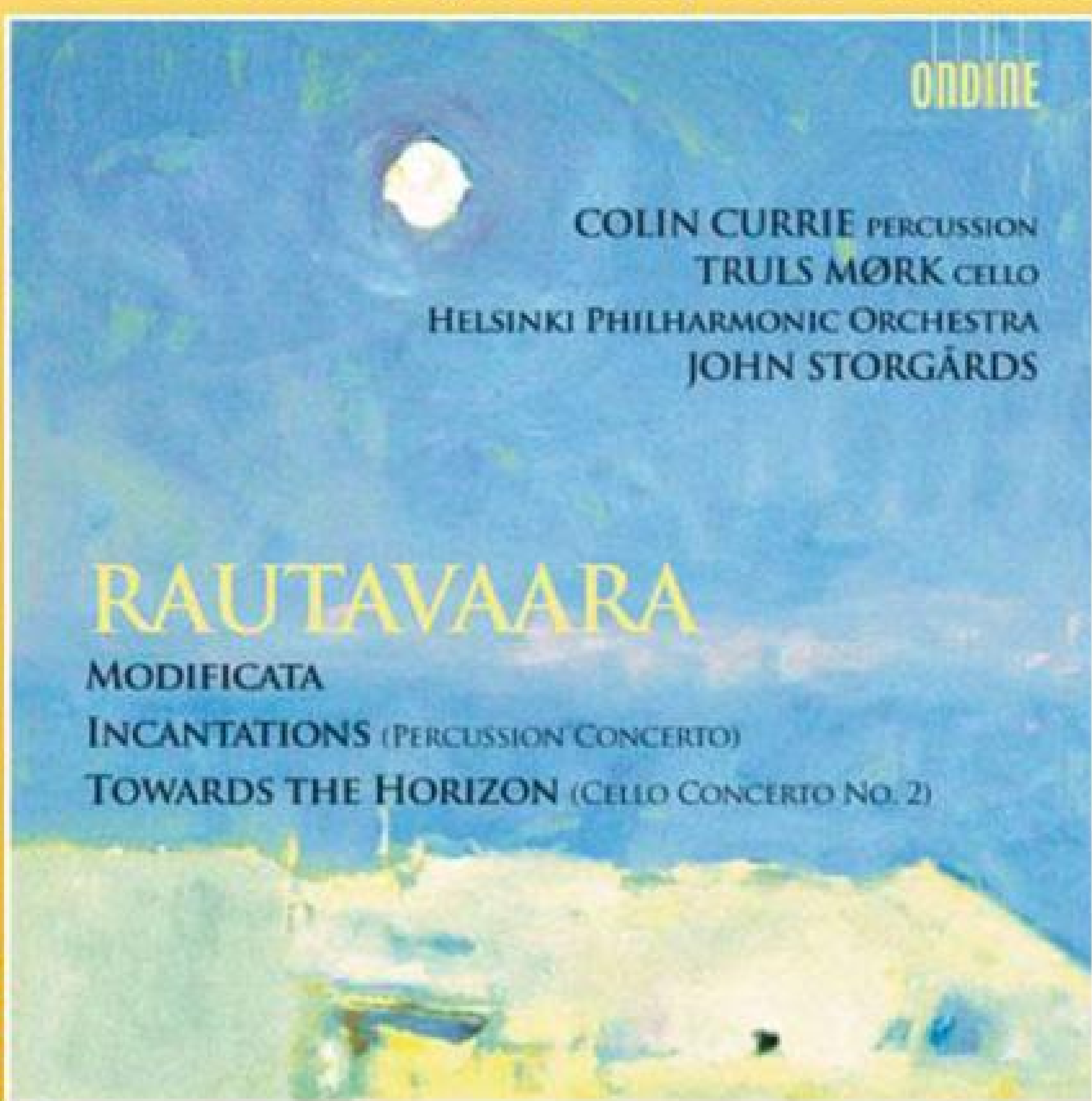


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TOWARDS THE HORIZON (CELLO CONCERTO NO. 2)

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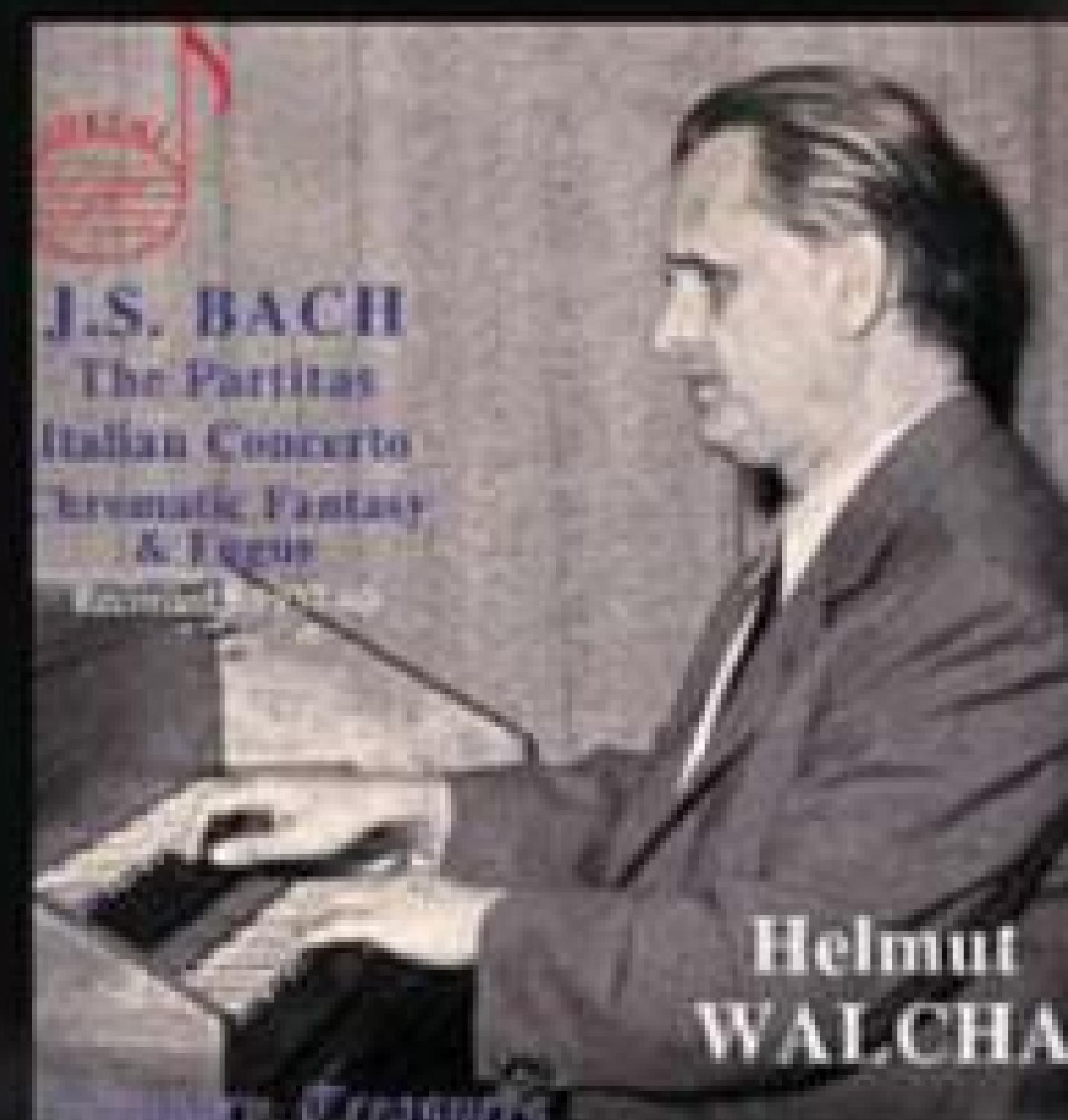


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METRONOME



DOREMI • DHR7985/6

Organist/harpsichordist Helmut Walcha achieved great fame as one of the most respected interpreters in history of the keyboard works of J.S. Bach. This 2CD set contains performances made between 1957 and 1960.



ARS PRODUKTION • ARS38108

More than 30 harp concertos were written during 'The age of Enlightenment and Romanticism'. The most well known from that period are those by Mozart and Boieldieu, but as this CD shows with delectable style, there are many other hidden gems waiting to be discovered.



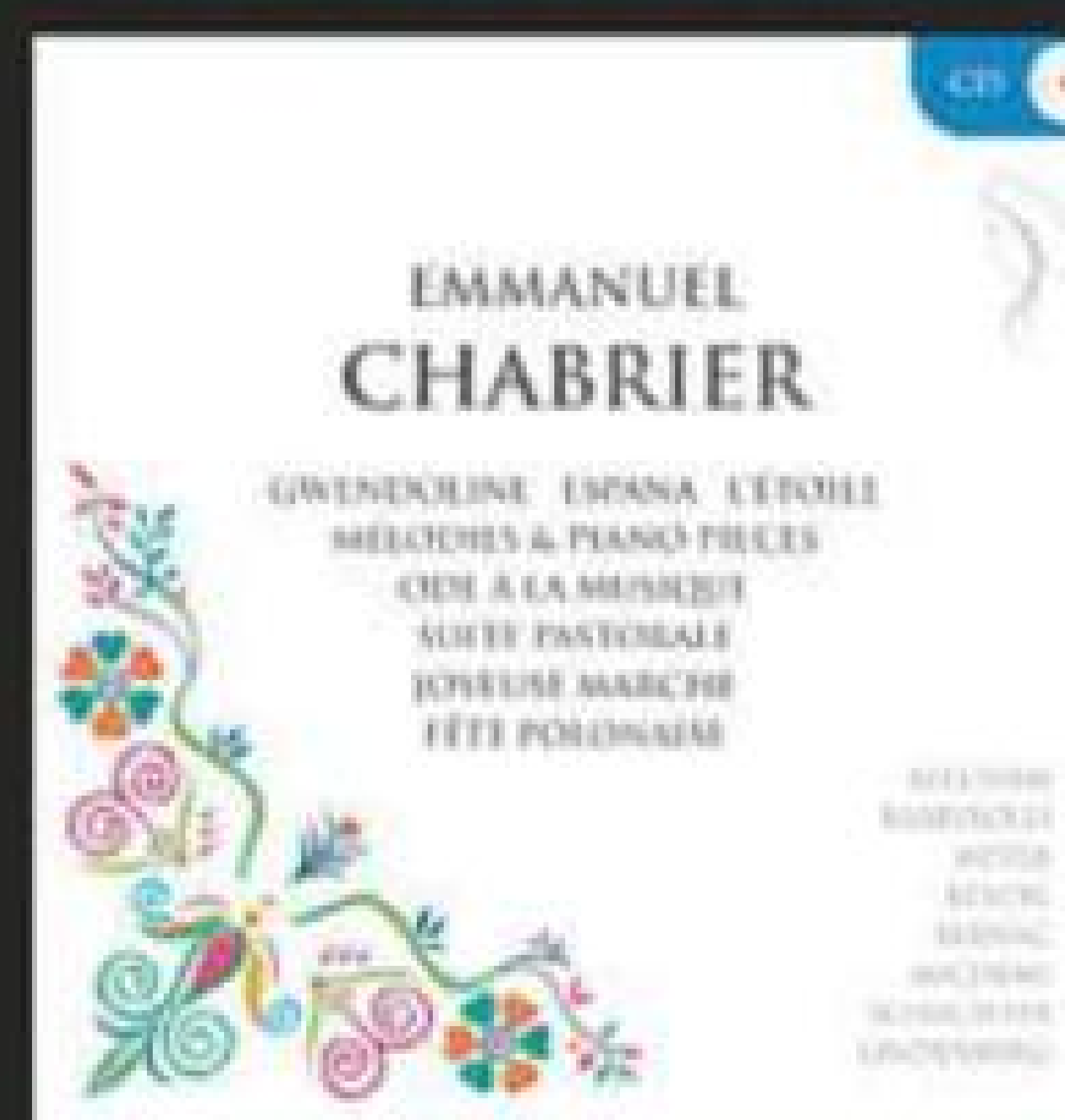
THOROFON • CTH2588

Throughout his long working life Harald Genzmer (1909-2007) was at the forefront of contemporary music, writing works that experimented with the sounds and capabilities of almost every instrument. This CD consists of pieces for flute, viola and harp, performed by Trio Charolca.



METRONOME • METCD1087

Metronome's exciting new 2CD release premieres the first complete recording of *The Broken Consort* by Matthew Locke, performed by the internationally renowned Locke Consort. 'Delightful music, performed with precision, style and communication of the highest order.' *Gramophone*



MAGDALEN • METCD8015\*

The genial Chabrier was at the epicentre of French artistic circles in the late 19th century. His influence on 20th century music was immense, and if you enjoy Stravinsky, Debussy, Ravel, Satie, Poulenc and de Falla, then you will love this disc!

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Also available at [www.metronome.co.uk](http://www.metronome.co.uk)





### Danish quartet's debut disc kicks off new Langgaard cycle

The majority of Langgaard's 10 string quartets (only six of which are numbered) are concentrated in his twenties and early thirties, which is to say the time of what many of his admirers, myself included, would consider his finest works: Symphonies Nos 4 to 6, the opera *Antikrist* and *Music of the Spheres*. Even so, and despite the fact that I had long ago heard the Kontra Quartet's performances both live and in their first recorded incarnation on RCA LPs, the impact of the Second and Third Quartets came as a shock – not far short of a first encounter with, say, the Janáček quartets.

That's partly because they are so packed with incident. With its strenuous, conflictual rhythms and flighty inventiveness, No 2 (1918) sets the bar high; and No 3 (1924) displays a concentrated blend of eruptive combativeness and whimsical extravagance that is if anything even more impressive. True, the 'Sixth' Quartet (the numbering is chaotic and anything but chronological) and the Variations are less distinctive, but they are never less than resourceful and their relaxed tone is welcome as a respite from the high metabolic rate of the main works on the disc.

Then there is the contribution of the Nightingale Quartet. This young Danish ensemble throws itself into the music with a vehemence and sense of purpose that go far beyond the pioneering venture of the Kontras. By the clock the Nightingales may be a little slower but they bring such impetus and fire to bear that you would hardly guess. They are also far better recorded, in a warmer, more spacious acoustic, and the booklet essay, by Bendt Viinholdt Nielsen, doyen of Langgaard scholars, is top-notch. So Dacapo's re-recording of these works is more than welcome; and to call the second volume 'eagerly anticipated' would be a massive understatement. **David Fanning**

*Selected comparison:*

*Kontra Qt (DACA) DCCD9302*

## Mendelssohn • Schumann

**Mendelssohn** Piano Trios – No 1, Op 49; No 2, Op 66

**Schumann** Six Studies in Canonic Form, Op 56

(arr Kirchner)

**Hagai Shaham** *vn* **Raphael Wallfisch** *vc* **Arnon Erez** *pf*

Nimbus © NI5875 (77' • DDD)



### Bach-tinged Romantic trios played by distinguished names

The debut collaboration of these three distinguished soloists is less of an ego-fest than you might imagine. The reciprocity in their playing allows you to listen to it as chamber music for its own sake rather than the musical



Fathoming Langgaard: Josefine Dalsgaard of the Nightingale String Quartet

curiosity these all-star combinations can often be – they only show their soloists' mettle when appropriate, and in a way that makes this disc feel appealingly like you're having your cake and eating it (there is an engaging amount of this in the D minor Trio in particular, which is never over-egged, despite the first movement being a definite self-indulgence risk). Their ensemble in the hymn-like opening theme in the first movement of the C minor Trio is like one voice but rolls into three distinct opinions as the piece progresses, making it infectiously joyful in all its innate Mozartian intelligence and humour.

The Schumannesque personality of Mendelssohn's piano parts provides a thread of coherence to this recording (Arnon Erez bringing a lyrical quality in particular to the opening of the second movement of the D minor Trio, which he makes almost a song without words in its own right) that is illuminated by the addition of Theodor Kirchner's arrangements of Schumann's own *Studies in Canonic Form* for pedal piano. The Bachian characteristics of these canons echo the influence of Bach you can hear in the complicated counterpoint of the Mendelssohn, and this trio's perfectly democratic performance of them confirms the disc's programming as enjoyable as much for its conception as its substance.

**Caroline Gill**

## Poulenc

Flute Sonata. Oboe Sonata. Clarinet Sonata. Violin Sonata. Cello Sonata. Sextet for Piano and Wind Quintet. *Un joueur de flute berce les ruines* for Solo Flute. Villanelle for Piccolo and Piano. Sonata for Horn, Trumpet and Trombone. Sarabande for Solo Guitar. Sonata for Two Clarinets. Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon. *Elégie* for Horn and Piano. Trio for Piano, Oboe and Bassoon

**London Conchord Ensemble**

Champs Hill Records © ② CHRCDO28 (148' • DDD)



### All Poulenc's chamber works from the London supergroup

Anybody who has tackled Poulenc's chamber music will know that it is fun and rewarding to play. Anybody who has not tackled it will be able to appreciate the element of enjoyment inherent in the music from the way that these instrumentalists perform it. This is an excellent, spirited two-CD set encompassing 14 works for various combinations, including those fine late sonatas for flute, oboe and clarinet, where Poulenc's typical blend of languid lyricism, piquantly perfumed harmony and snook-cocking humour achieved a perfect synthesis. A factor that comes across clearly here is that Poulenc had a more or less infallible ear for tapping into the timbre and personality of different instruments.

The one occasion where his instinct failed him is in the Violin Sonata, but the mellower



# Festival Bayreuth at the Liceu 2012

Bicentenary  
Richard Wagner

## Der fliegende Holländer *concert version*

September 1 and 4, 2012

Sebastian Weigle

Ievgueni Nikitin, Ricarda Merbeth, Michael König, Franz-Josef Selig, Benjamin Bruns and Christa Mayer.

## Lohengrin *concert version*

September 2 and 5, 2012

Sebastian Weigle

Klaus Florian Vogt, Annette Dasch, Susan Maclean, Thomas J. Mayer, Wilhelm Schwinghammer, Samuel Youn, Stefan Heibach, Willem van der Heyden.

## Tristan und Isolde *concert version*

September 6, 2012

Peter Schneider

Irene Theorin, Robert Dean Smith, Michelle Breedt, Jukka Rasilainen, Robert Holl, Ralf Lukas, Clemens Bieber, Arnold Bezuyen and Martin Snell.

Orchestra and Chorus of the Bayreuth Festival

### OPERA

## La forza del destino

by Giuseppe Verdi

October 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18 and 20, 2012

Renato Palumbo · Jean-Claude Auvray

Violeta Urmana / Micaela Carosi / Norma Fantini, Marcello Giordani / Zoran Todorovich / Alfred Kim, Ludovic Tézier / Leo Nucci / Vladimir Stoyanov, Marianne Cornetti / Enkelejda Shkosa / Anna Smirnova, Vitalij Kowaljow / Carlo Colombara / Diogenes Randes, Bruno de Simone / Roberto de Candia.

## L'elisir d'amore

by Gaetano Donizetti

November 11, 14, 16 and 18, 2012. May 27 and 30, 2013. June 2 and 5, 2013

Daniele Callegari · Mario Gas

Nicole Cabell / Aleksandra Kurzak, Javier Camarena / Rolando Villazon, Joan Martín-Royo, Simone Alberghini / Ambrogio Maestri.

## Rusalka

by Antonín Dvořák

December 22, 27 and 30, 2012. January 2, 5, 11 and 14, 2013

Andrew Davis · Stefan Herheim

Camilla Nylund, Klaus Florian Vogt, Günther Groissböck, Ildiko Komlosi, Emily Magee.

## Il pirata *concert version*

by Vincenzo Bellini

January 4 and 7, 2013

Antonino Fogliani

Mariella Devia, Gregory Kunde, Vladimir Stoyanov.

## Iolanta *concert version*

by Piotr I. Tchaikovsky

January 10 and 13, 2013

Valeri Gergiev

Anna Netrebko · Mariinsky Theatre Symphony Orchestra and Chorus of St. Petersburg

## Les contes d'Hoffmann

by Jacques Offenbach

February 4, 5, 7, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20 and 23, 2013

Stéphane Denève · Laurent Pelly

Vittorio Grigolo / Ismael Jordi · Natahe Dessay / Eglise Gutiérrez, Laurent Naouri / Greer Grimsley, Michèle Losier / Gemma Coma-Alabert, Francisco Vas.

## Street Scene

by Kurt Weill

March 1, 2, 4 and 5, 2013

Tim Murray · John Fulljames

Geof Dolton, Elena Ferrari, Paul Featherstone, Kate Nelson, Paul Curievici.

## Madama Butterfly

by Giacomo Puccini

March 21, 23, 24, 26 and 27, 2013. July 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27 and 29, 2013

Josep Pons / Daniele Callegari · Moshe Leiser and Patrice Caurier

Hui He / Ermonela Jaho / Patricia Racette / Amarilli Nizza · Roberto Alagna / Jorge de Leon / Stefano Secco / Roberto Aronica, Giovanni Meoni / Fabio Capitanucci / Carlos Bergasa / Àngel Odena, Jossie Perez / Gemma Coma-Alabert / Marie-Nicole Lemieux.

## Das Rheingold

by Richard Wagner

April 20, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29, 2013. May 2, 2013

Josep Pons · Robert Carsen

Albert Dohmen / Jason Howard, Ralf Lukas, Marcel Reijans, Kurt Streit, Ain Anger / Friedemann Röhlig, Ante Jerkunica / Bjarni Thor Kristinsson, Andrew Shore / Oleg Bryjak, Mikhail Vekua, Mihoko Fujimura / Katarina Karmés, Erika Wueschner, Ewa Podles / Nadine Weissmann, Maria Hinojosa.

## Il turco in Italia

by Gioachino Rossini

May 18, 23 and 28, 2013. June 1, 4 and 6, 2013

Victor Pablo Pérez · Christof Loy

Ildebrando D'Arcangelo, Nino Machaidze, Renato Girolami, David Alegret, Pietro Spagnoli, Marisa Martins, Albert Casals.

## Lucio Silla

by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

June 21, 22, 26 and 28, 2013. July 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7, 2013

Harry Bicket · Claus Guth

Kurt Streit / Alessandro Liberatore, Patricia Petibon / Laura Aikin, Silvia Tro Santafé / Marina Comparato, Inga Kalna / Iano Tamar, Ofèlia Sala / M. José Moreno, Antonio Lozano.

## Rienzi *concert version*

by Richard Wagner

June 27 and 30, 2013

Pablo González

Christian Franz, Michelle Breedt, Elisabete Matos, Peter Rose, Friedemann Röhlig, Orquestra Simfònica de Barcelona i Nacional de Catalunya

Symphony Orchestra and Chorus of the Gran Teatre del Liceu

### FILM

#### Das Nibelungen

Fritz Lang

Music by Gottfried Huppertz

April 27, 2013

### DANCE

#### Alvin Ailey American

Dance Theater

*Festa Barocca*

*Love Stories*

*Revelations*

September 13, 14 and 15, 2012

#### American Ballet Theatre

*Don Quichotte*

October 24, 25, 26, 27 and 28, 2012

#### Prague National Theatre Ballet

*The Nutcracker,*

*a Christmas Story*

November 22, 23, 24 and 25, 2012

#### Ballett am Rhein

Düsseldorf Duisburg

*Kunst der Fuge*

February 9 and 10, 2013

### CONCERTS

#### Bejun Mehta

Freiburg Baroque Orchestra

December 3, 2012

#### L «Francesc Viñas» Contest

January 18 and 20, 2013

#### Jordi Savall

Le Concert des Nations

February 15, 2013

#### Joyce DiDonato

*Drama Queens*

Il Complesso Barocco

March 6, 2013

#### Cycle «Liceu al Palau»

January 10 and 27, 2013

February 25, 2013

June 18, 2013

#### Concerts in L'Auditori

March 8, 9 and 10, 2013

April 12, 13 and 14, 2013

### EL PETIT LICEU

(Children's programme)

#### Cosí FUN tutte

Guillem Tell

#### El Superbarber de Sevilla

Petruixka with IT Dansa

#### Allegro Vivace

Els musics de Bremen

Amb els peus a la Lluna

La casa flotant

La Ventafocs



Gran Teatre del Liceu

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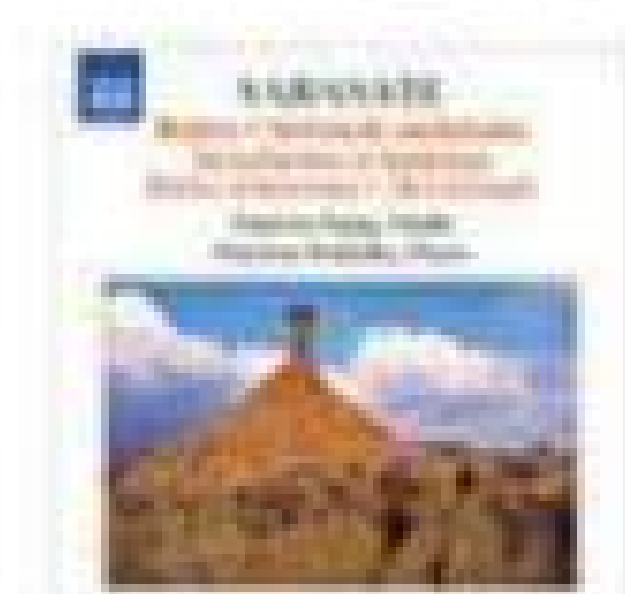
Cello Sonata and all those earlier pieces such as the Sonata for horn, trumpet and trombone and the Sonata for two clarinets find him entirely in his *métier*, astutely using the characters of the instruments to define the nature of the music. The Trio for piano, oboe and bassoon of 1926 and the Sextet for piano and wind quintet of 1939 reveal Poulenc in full flood of inspiration, engaging the instruments in animated or muted discussion and in the process creating scripts that are immaculately structured and full of vitality. The London Conchord Ensemble manifestly relish what Poulenc has to offer, playing with panache, wit and discreet sensitivity in performances that are a constant joy.

Geoffrey Norris

## Sarasate

Boléro, Op 30. Zortzico d'Iparraquirre, Op 39. Sérénade andalouse, Op 10. Adiós montañas mías, Op 37. Le sommeil, Op 11. Rêverie, Op 4. Introduction et Fandango, Op 40. Fantaisie-Caprice. Prière et Berceuse, Op 17. Confidences, Op 7. Caprice sur Mireille de Gounod, Op 6. Airs écossais, Op 34. Los pájaros de Chile. Les adieux, Op 9

Tianwa Yang *vn* Markus Hadulla *pf*  
Naxos © 8 570893 (79' • DDD)



Yang's Sarasate  
traversal continues

The young Chinese violinist Tianwa Yang has made a speciality of playing and recording the spectacular violin works of the legendary virtuoso Pablo de Sarasate. This is the third of her discs for Naxos covering the violin-and-piano pieces, most of them short, and she has also recorded for Naxos two discs of Sarasate's rather longer pieces for violin and orchestra, most of them potpourris.

Her gifts are ideally suited to such a task with her flawless intonation, not least in the many passages involving high harmonics in the most extreme register. She is also brilliant in giving the many Spanish dance rhythms a winning lilt, so that this essentially trivial music is presented full of charm. One simply marvels and enjoys.

She begins with a delicious *Boléro*, with the main tune typically given a reprise on high harmonics. The *Sérénade andalouse* brings plentiful double-stopping and a waltz-like middle section, while *Le sommeil* ('Sleep') starts with a hushed piano solo before the violin's gentle melody begins. *Rêverie* is aria-like in construction with a waltz as the final section, while the *Introduction and Fandango*, in its sequence of contrasted sections, is longer than most items.

The *Fantaisie-Caprice* is just a sequence of effects, while the *Airs écossais* remind one of Bruch's similar use of Scottish folksong (including one very similar) in his *Scottish*

*Fantasy*. Yang has even managed to find a piece only recently published, *Los pájaros de Chile* ('The Birds of Chile'), with the violin imitating birdsong. Such a disc can easily be dismissed but, as played by Yang, with well-sprung accompaniment from Markus Hadulla and clear, well-focused recording, it would be churlish to dismiss the delights of the disc.

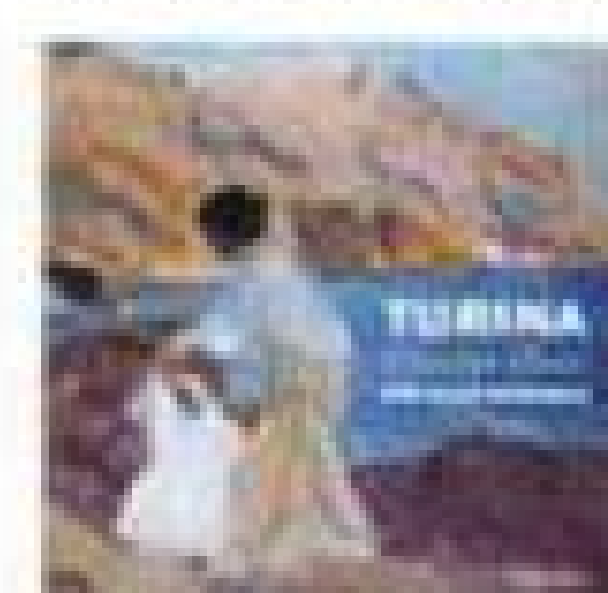
Edward Greenfield

## Turina

Piano Quartet, Op 67. Violin Sonata No 2, 'Sonata española', Op 82. Escena andaluza, Op 7. Piano Trio No 1. La oración del torero, Op 34

Nash Ensemble

Hyperion © CDA67889 (72' • DDD)



Nash Ensemble with Turina's  
aromatic chamber works

Bravo to the Nash Ensemble for championing these chamber works by Joaquín Turina. Neither of Turina's compatriots and mentors, Albéniz and Falla, contributed much to the chamber repertoire themselves but they were instrumental in guiding Turina towards his Andalusian roots and discouraging him from aping early-20th-century French contemporaries.

Much of the Gallic finesse that Turina acquired during his time as a pupil of d'Indy in Paris certainly shines through in this music in terms of texture and harmony but his harnessing of folk music to the classical cause gives all these pieces a distinctly Spanish aroma. The G major Violin Sonata, superbly played here by Marianne Thorsen and Ian Brown, is actually subtitled *Sonata española* and conjures up characteristic images of Spanish fervour, drama, gaiety and sensual lyricism in a highly attractive melange of local colour, be it Andalusian or, in the first movement, Basque as well. Turina's manner of dealing with these elements is sophisticated and rich in variety. He could scarcely have imagined that one day an ensemble would produce an entire CD of his music but the Spanish traits by no means become wearing or predictable. The *Escena andaluza* for viola and piano quintet, while clearly Andalusian in inspiration, manages to manipulate the folk-like material with subtlety and in a way that sounds both finely crafted and spontaneous. Like the A minor Piano Quartet, the First Piano Trio is a substantial, ear-catching and individual work, *La oración del torero* for string quartet a little gem.

Geoffrey Norris

## '1600'

Anonymous Fantaisie (attrib Rossi) Bononcini Sinfonia quarta Castello Sonata decimasesta a quattro Dall'Abaco Concerto a quattro, Op 2 No 1 Frescobaldi Canzona quinta a quattro G Gabrieli



SU 4081-2

Great Czech Conductors  
Karel Šejna  
Czech Philharmonic Orchestra



SU 4082-2

Great Czech Conductors  
Martin Turnovský  
Czech Philharmonic Orchestra  
Brno Philharmonic Orchestra



SU 4064-2

František Benda / Violin Concertos  
Ivan Ženatý – violin  
Prague Philharmonia

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Dunedin Consort & Players - John Butt - 20 June

**Le Messie**

Dunedin Consort & Players - John Butt - 21 June

**Saul**

The Sixteen - Harry Christophers - 24 June

**Israel In Egypt**

The Sixteen - Harry Christophers - 25 June

**Solomon**

Gabrielli Consort & Players - Paul Mac Creesh - 26 June

**Le Messie**

The King's Consort - Robert King - 10, 11 July

#### OPÉRAS

**Orlando**

Il Complesso Barocco - Alan Curtis - 11 June

**Alcina**

Les Talens Lyriques - Christophe Rousset - 12 June

**Jules César**

Accademia Bizantina - Ottavio Dantone - 14 June

**Xerxès**

Ensemble Matheus - Jean Christophe Spinosi - 7<sup>th</sup> July

**Tamerlano**

Les Musiciens du Louvre, Grenoble - Marc Minkowski - 11 July

**Gluck : Orphée et Eurydice**

Ballet National de Marseille - Opéra de Saint Etienne

Frédéric Flamand - Giuseppe Grazioli - 24, 25 June

#### CONCERTS

**Cécilia Bartoli : Héroïnes Haendéliennes**

Il Giardino Armonico - Giovanni Antonini - 13 June

**Gala des 4 Contre Ténors**

Cencic - Wey - Sabata - Yi - Collegium 1704 - Vacklav Luks  
19 June

**Cécilia Bartoli : Sacrificium**

La Scintilla - Ada Pesch - 27 June

**Max Emanuel Cencic : Héros Haendeliens**

Armonia Aténia - Georges Petrou - 9 July

**Royal Fireworks Music - Water Music**

Le Concert des Nations - Jordi Savall - 5, 6, 7 July

**Water Music - Il Delirio Amoroso**

Le Concert d'Astrée - Emmanuelle Haïm - 6 July

**L'âge d'Or à Cappella**

The Monteverdi Choir - Sir John Eliot Gardiner - 10 June

**Les 24 Violons du Roi**

Lully, Campra, Marais, Lalande

Académie des 24 Violons du Roi - Patrick Cohen Akenine - 22 June

**Alexandre Tharaud**

Rameau, Couperin, Ravel - 28 June

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CHÂTEAU DE VERSAILLES SPECTACLES



CHÂTEAU DE VERSAILLES



Canzone a quattro detta la spiritata **Legrenzi**  
 Sonata seconda a quattro **De Macque** Consonanze  
 stravaganti **Marini** Passacaglio a quattro **Merula**  
 Canzone quinta a quattro detta la chremasca.  
 Capriccio cromatico **Salvatore** Canzone francesca  
 seconda a quattro **Torelli** Concerto a quattro,  
 Op 6 No 1 **Zanetti** Il scolaro...per imparare a  
 suonare di violino

**Concerto Italiano / Rinaldo Alessandrini** *hpd/org*  
 Naïve © OP30531 (67' • DDD)



### Alessandrini on the stylistic byways of the 1600s

Rinaldo Alessandrini's chronological survey of Italian music for four-part strings from the seicento stretches from a canzona published in Venice by Gabrieli (1608) to string concertos by Torelli (Augsburg, 1698) and Dall'Abaco (Amsterdam, 1712). Olivier Lexa's erudite booklet-note points out that this repertory not only demonstrates the gradual development of instrumental music during the 17th century but also represents Italian composers whose influence extended far across Europe, because they travelled to places such as Antwerp (Frescobaldi), Munich (Gabrieli), Warsaw (Merula), Düsseldorf (Salvatore), Versailles (Legrenzi), Berlin (Torelli), Vienna and London (Bononcini).

Concerto Italiano's lean ensemble of a string quartet, harpsichord and archlute plays the descending chromatic figures in a lamentful *Fantaisie* from Rossi's *Orfeo* with finesse and sensitivity; it leads without pause into a spirited canzona by Gabrieli, followed immediately by a witty canzona by Merula. His piece was published only seven years after Gabrieli's but Concerto Italiano's zesty performance illuminates the distinct offering of a composer who was about 40 years younger. Alessandrini's programme has a seamless artistic flow that gently pulls the listener along an illuminating narrative: the sombre dissonances of a short piece by de Macque and an ensuing dance-like canzona by Frescobaldi are examples of extraordinary music that is brief and concise, whereas an extended *battaglia* sonata by Castello gives the violinists something to get really stuck into, in both crisp battle music and softer melancholic passages. A short ballet of seven movements from Gasparo Zanetti's collection of dances (published 1645) is played exquisitely, and Alessandrini ensures that later music by Legrenzi and Torelli possesses astute dance rhythms and shapely harmonic details.

David Vickers

### 'British Clarinet Sonatas, Vol 1'

**Bax** Clarinet Sonata **Bliss** Two Pieces – Pastoral  
**Howells** Clarinet Sonata **Ireland** Fantasy-Sonata  
**Stanford** Clarinet Sonata, Op 129

**Michal Collins** *cl* **Michael McHale** *pf*  
 Chandos © CHAN10704 (73' • DDD)

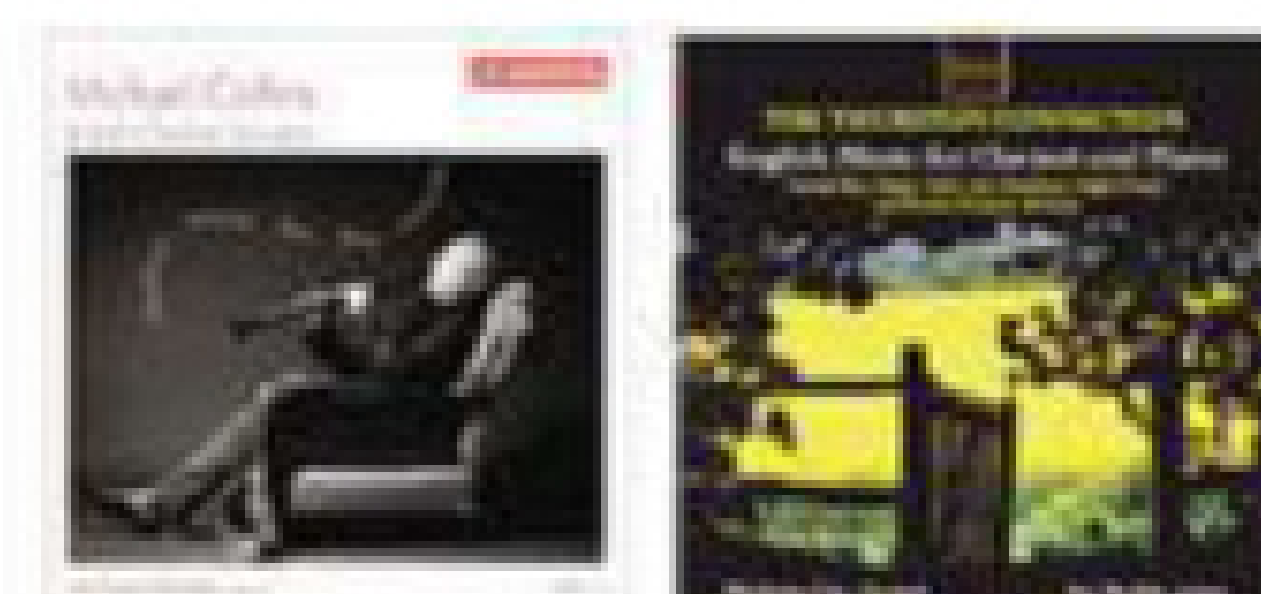
### 'The Thurston Connection'

'English Music for Clarinet and Piano'

**Bax** Clarinet Sonata **RR Bennett** Duo concertante  
**Fiske** Clarinet Sonata **Hamilton** Three Nocturnes,  
 Op 6 **Hugh Wood** Paraphrase on 'Bird of Paradise',  
 Op 26

**Nicholas Cox** *cl* **Ian Buckle** *pf*

British Music Society © BMS440CD (69' • DDD)



### Draper, Thurston and the course of British clarinet music in the 20th century

English clarinet music of the 20th century is something of a phenomenon. Perhaps by dint of the clarinet's lyrical disposition, its wide tessitura and broad range of dynamics, especially of its 'hushed quietness', it clearly appealed to a broad array of composers, as did the brilliance of one of its most celebrated executants, Frederick Thurston (or his teacher Charles Draper), who was closely connected with many of them. Michael Collins, a pupil of Thea King (Mrs Thurston), brings myriad impressive nuances to his programme of five works written between 1911 and 1947. In Stanford's pioneering Sonata, Op 129, he accentuates the composer's brittle voice in the outer movements and the more lithe yet lamenting tones of the central 'Caoine'. In Ireland's Fantasy-Sonata Collins seems almost to bathe in the rhapsodic atmosphere of the free melodic sections, while in the Howells Sonata the long sustained phrases (for which Thurston was known) are executed with control and with a sense of subtle melancholy quintessential to the introspective style of Howells's chamber music.

Both Collins's and Cox's recordings feature the once hugely popular Bax Clarinet Sonata of 1934, a colourful and intensely romantic essay in two well-contrasted movements. Collins's tone is glowingly sustained in the first movement and he is superbly accompanied by McHale in Bax's almost orchestrally conceived piano part, though I confess to preferring his slightly more elastic interpretation with Ian Brown (Hyperion, 5/96). Cox's finely paced performance, by contrast, is informed by a return to Bax's original markings and phrasing through a study of the surviving manuscript. The two premiere recordings in Cox's programme, Roger Fiske's Sonata and Iain Hamilton's Three Nocturnes, are works well worth a more prominent place in the repertoire, and Cox's readings are deeply sympathetic. He and Buckle capture the imagery and intensity of Hugh Wood's *Paraphrase on 'Bird of Paradise'* and round off the CD with a virtuoso display of agility and control in Richard Rodney Bennett's acerbic *Duo concertante* of 1985.

Jeremy Dibble

## IN THE STUDIO

An inside view of who's before the mics and what they're recording

### • Mendelssohn from Bevan

Fans of South Bank Show Award-nominated Sophie Bevan can look forward to some Mendelssohn songs from the soprano. A well-known producer commented via Twitter on April 5 that he'd just heard Bevan sing 'the most wonderful *Scheidend*' at Champs Hill accompanied by Malcolm Martineau. We will keep our ears to the ground for release details.

### • Trpčeski Live

Microphones were hanging for Simon Trpčeski's late-March recital at the Wigmore Hall, an evening of works by Liszt, Bach and Schubert – including the latter's *Wandererfantasie*, Trpčeski's performance of which was described by one reviewer as 'one of the most intelligent I have ever heard live'. Wigmore Hall plans to release a disc on its own label soon.

### • Parry in Wales

A year after Westminster Abbey resounded to the strains of *I Was Glad* and *Jerusalem* at the Royal wedding, the BBC National Orchestra and Chorus of Wales are due to record works by Charles Hubert Parry at Hoddinott Hall in Cardiff. The disc for Chandos will include Parry's 'Coronation Te Deum', Magnificat for double choir and *The Glories of our Blood and State*. Neeme Järvi will conduct.

### • Queyras's Elgar and Britten

Harmonia Mundi cellist Jean-Guihen Queyras (pictured) arrives in London this May to record the Britten and Elgar concertante cello works with the BBC Symphony Orchestra. Queyras's 1999 recording of Britten's cello sonatas earned a strong recommendation from us for its 'fine sense of phrase' (1/99).



### • More from Padmore

Also on Harmonia Mundi, Mark Padmore has started work on the follow-up to his Britten disc (see review, page 100) with song-cycles by Vaughan Williams (including *On Wenlock Edge*), Warlock and Dove, also with the Britten Sinfonia. Look out for the disc in 2013.



# Instrumental



## Harriet Smith on a new Bach disc from Christine Schornsheim:

*'There's a palpable sense of a player in love with the capabilities of the instrument itself'*

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 66**



## Jed Distler reviews the first volume of Barry Douglas's Brahms survey:

*'Douglas's beautiful, rounded tone will satisfy listeners who like a more pianistically oriented Handel Variations'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 67**

### JS Bach

Das wohltemperirte Clavier, Book 2

Peter Hill *pf*

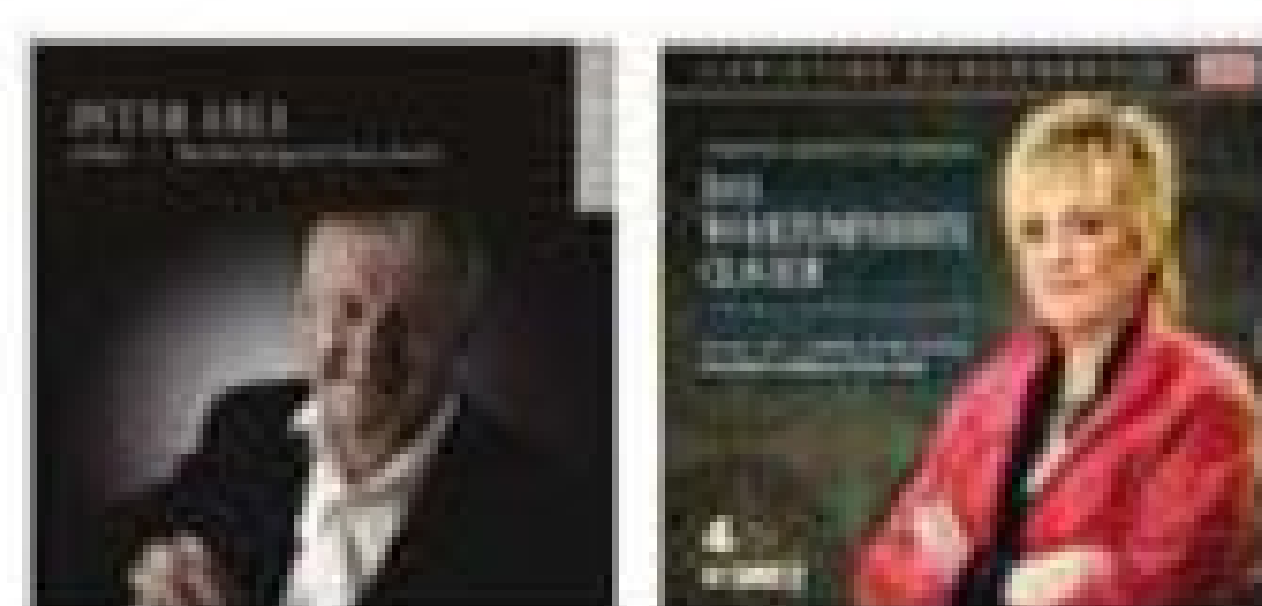
Delphian ③ ② DCD34101 (158' • DDD)

### JS Bach

Das wohltemperirte Clavier

Christine Schornsheim *hpd*

Capriccio ③ ④ C7115 (4h 18' • DDD)



### Bach keyboard linchpins on a modern Steinway and a 1624 Ruckers harpsichord

Here we have two quite different approaches to the '48': Peter Hill plays Book 2 on a modern Steinway, while Christine Schornsheim performs both books on a very fine Ruckers harpsichord originally dating from 1624 and subsequently updated several times before being beautifully restored 30 years ago by Christopher Clarke. It has a strikingly warm and highly coloured range of sound, something Schornsheim exploits to the full.

Hill is unfailingly musicianly in his approach, his playing full of the kind of insights that can only come from long acquaintance with the music. He lets Bach speak for himself – this is entirely un-egotistical playing – the opposite end of the spectrum from Gould's highly interventionist approach, often maddening but equally frequently shot through with brilliance.

In general it is the faster pieces that come off most convincingly in Hill's hands. Prelude No 15, for instance, has lots of subtle details of touch, though I can imagine it having more life still, as it does in Hewitt's vivacious reading. But turn to Edwin Fischer and suddenly the colouristic possibilities really open up, coupled with a propulsion that gives the music a real one-in-a-bar feel. What I miss in Hill's recording is an audible relish for the instrument itself, the sense of glorying in the physicality of this music as well as its cerebral demands. The finest piano versions come from those who delight in the possibilities of the modern instrument, dynamic range and pedal included. Perhaps Hill's rather more subdued approach emanates from a scholarly respect for the original, but in the end the result is a little pale

alongside the legendary recordings of Fischer and Feinberg. In more recent times, Hewitt finds much to dance about, which gives her set real vigour and life – and joy too. Barenboim has much to say: though he can be very overbearing in places, in the more intimate numbers you're constantly made aware that you're in the presence of musical royalty.

It's in the fugues that Hill's simplicity can come to seem just too plain, even in places a bit dry, with the extraordinary tension that Bach creates often not fully explored. The B flat minor Fugue is a case in point, with Hill underplaying the inexorable quality of Bach's chromatically inflected lines, something superbly illustrated by Fischer.

Reticence is not a criticism you could level against Schornsheim, whose playing is full of character and immediacy, emphasised by a recording that gives you a front-row seat. And, in contrast to Hill, there's a palpable sense of a player in love with the capabilities of the instrument itself, not least in the fast-moving C minor and D major Preludes of Book 1.

She manages to personalise such well-known numbers as the opening Prelude of Book 1 in a way that is entirely natural-sounding, while the closing bars of the Book 2 B minor Prelude are wonderfully dramatic. There are some disappointments along the way, perhaps inevitably in such a momentous project: the D sharp minor Fugue from Book 1 and the B flat minor Fugue from Book 2 both fail to take off, while the angular A minor Fugue from Book 2 acquires an edge of almost Gothic horror which is a trifle overdone. But overall this is an appealing addition to the catalogue, even if it doesn't quite match the combination of acute musicality and profound intelligence that mark out Davitt Moroney and Gustav Leonhardt as truly exceptional.

#### Harriet Smith

*Selected comparisons:*

*E Fischer* (12/34<sup>th</sup>, 2/37<sup>th</sup>, 9/37<sup>th</sup>, 3/90) (EMI) 391958-2

*Gould* (3/74<sup>th</sup>, 4/75<sup>th</sup>, 6/89) (SONY) 5160462

*Leonhardt* (4/88<sup>th</sup>, 12/90) (DHM) GD77011/12

*Moroney* (4/89) (HARM) HMC90 1285/8

*Hewitt* (11/98<sup>th</sup>, 7/99<sup>th</sup>) (HYPER) CDS44291/4

*Barenboim* (WARN) 2564 63165-2

*Feinberg* (RUSS) RDCD15013

### JS Bach

Toccata, Adagio and Fugue, BWV564. Concerto (after Vivaldi), BWV593. Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele, BWV654. Preludes and Fugues – BWV541; BWV544. Vater unser im Himmelreich, BWV682. O Mensch, bewein' dein' Sünde gross, BWV622. Passacaglia and Fugue, BWV582

David Goode *org*

Signum ③ SIGCD261 (80' • DDD)

Played on the 1714 Gottfried Silbermann organ of Freiberg Cathedral



### Goode follows his trio sonatas disc with big-boned Bach

It is obvious from the very opening of the Toccata, Adagio and Fugue that we are in the presence of a truly magnificent organ and an organist who has a real flair for interpreting Bach. Powerful dramatic gestures (a little undermined by the removal of 16-foot tone in the opening echo passages) and a gloriously delivered pedal cadenza lead into some sparkling fingerwork; and, while the booklet-notes incongruously refer to Liszt's little-known piano transcription, Goode plays it all with the kind of all-encompassing virtuosity – hands, feet, registration and intellect – which is unique to the organ.

What a glorious sound this 1714 Silbermann makes, and what a superb recording Signum Classics has come up with, capturing it with a hefty dose of atmosphere but with untarnished clarity of detail. Much of the slim booklet is devoted to justifying the choice of instrument but, interesting as this is, it is merely wasted space. Our ears provide justification enough.

Goode is obviously relishing this fine instrument and gives us something of a Cook's tour through its manifest delights. Nothing disturbs and the subtle Tremulant added to the slow movement of the A minor Concerto has an almost violinistic quality.

Unashamed in his deployment of the pregnant pause, the decorative flourish and the grand gesture, Goode ensures that everything fits so nicely into place that, far from merely being an excuse to hear Bach on a great historic organ, we hear Bach played with perception and real musical intelligence. A thoroughly enjoyable disc from every aspect. **Marc Rochester**



## JS Bach

'Bach Transcriptions, Vol 10 – The Complete Bach Transcriptions by Camille Saint-Saëns' Cantatas: No 3 – Adagio; No 8 – Andantino; No 15 – Introduction et Air; No 29 – Overture; No 30 – Récitatif et Air; Choeur; No 35 – Presto; No 36 – Air. Solo Violin Partitas: No 1, BWV1002 – Bourrée; No 3, BWV1006 – Gavotte. Solo Violin Sonatas: No 2, BWV1003 – Andante; No 3, BWV1005 – Fugue; Largo. Concertos<sup>a</sup> – BWV593; BWV596 (all transc. Saint-Saëns except <sup>a</sup>transc I Philipp)

Nadejda Vlaeva *pf*

Hyperion Ⓢ CDA67873 (77' • DDD)



### Tenth Bach transcriptions disc offers Saint-Saëns's handiwork

As we enter double figures in Hyperion's distinguished series of transcriptions of Bach for piano, we are reminded of how the unknown cantata oeuvre was drip-fed to composers who subscribed to the Bach-Gesellschaft. This ambitious publication started with cantatas BWV1-10 in 1851 and, as Nigel Simeone reminds us in his compelling essay, the 100th wasn't reached until 24 years later. That the first 10 published works luckily contain such brilliance and diversity could only have accelerated Bach's reputation and enabled the choral works – *St Matthew Passion* aside – to be widely disseminated.

Since the art of transcription often represents something between awakening and homage, Nadejda Vlaeva offers through Bach another dimension to Saint-Saëns, that seemingly inexhaustible Renaissance man. His choice of the Sinfonia from BWV29 may not surprise but to enter into the dramatic, heady and image-laden rhetorical worlds of BWV3 and 8 is a testament to the composer's profound realisation of Bach's cantatas as the solar plexus of his work. In this regard, Saint-Saëns was a discerning pioneer.

As a protégée of Lazar Berman, Vlaeva rarely disappoints in matters of accomplished pianism, with plenty of that epic physical presence of her mentor, most obvious in the full-blooded and knotty heroics of Isidore Philipp's transcription of Bach's own tinkering with Vivaldi. The soft poetics of chiming funeral bells in the opening movement of BWV8 are exquisitely poised and the voicings in the reborn solo violin works generously yielding yet never sentimental. Vlaeva relishes the arranger's lucid classicism in conveying the essence of Bach's singular voice.

During this series, one recalls the devilish and often highly personal techniques of Rummel, Reger, Feinberg and Siloti. BWV35 is a rare moment of Vlaeva caught in the headlights rather too often but this young pianist sits worthily alongside the clutch of fine players who have illuminated this brilliant literature of Bachiana. What else has Hyperion up its sleeve? **Jonathan Freeman-Attwood**

## Brahms

'Works for Solo Piano, Vol 1'

Ballade, Op 10 No 4. Piano Pieces: Op 116 – Nos 1, 3, 4 & 7; Op 117 No 1; Op 118 – Nos 2 & 5. Two Rhapsodies, Op 79. Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel, Op 24

Barry Douglas *pf*

Chandos Ⓢ CHAN10716 (78' • DDD)



### Start of a new Brahms survey from Douglas

Pianists who embark on complete Brahms cycles usually present the groups of small pieces as integral units by opus number: the two Op 79 Rhapsodies, the three Op 117 Intermezzos, the four Op 119 *Klavierstücke* and so forth. Barry Douglas chooses to mix and match selections drawn from various groups, devising a running order that guarantees a long, well-sustained set that culminates with the large-scale *Handel Variations*.

One might consider Douglas's opening salvo, a rather rhetorical reading of the tempestuous B minor First Rhapsody from Op 79 (as opposed to sterner, more classically contained yet impassioned performances by Perahia, Gould and Rubinstein) as an overture to set up the tender E major Intermezzo, Op 116 No 4, that follows. Here Douglas achieves a fluid calm absent from his slower, less shapely 1987 traversal (RCA 12/87). The E major easily slips into the A major Intermezzo, Op 118 No 2, which Douglas presents in a gentle, yielding manner that differs from Rubinstein's faster, more robust version. On the other hand, Douglas's RCA G minor Capriccio, Op 116 No 3, proves more direct and incisive than his curvier remake but it's a toss-up between the earlier expansive, improvisational fluency of the B major Ballade, Op 10 No 4, and the more unified new version's simpler phrasing.

Douglas's beautiful, rounded tone and assiduously effected tempo relationships will satisfy listeners who like a less classically conceived, more pianistically oriented *Handel Variations*. This approach is evident vis-à-vis Douglas's slight tapering of the theme's phrase endings, his change of voicings on repeats and a general emphasis of colour over line. Notice, for example, Douglas's melody-focused *rubatos* in Var 3 and his disinclination to bring out the cross-rhythmic effect of Brahms's *staccato/legato* contrasts. His *legato* octaves in Var 6 shimmer gorgeously, at the expense of giving shape to their canonic interplay. He softens Var 8's motoric left-hand pedal-points and underplays Var 9's grandeur by softening the *sforzandos* and imposing small, arbitrary *accelerandos*. Similarly, Douglas's *rubatos* pull focus from other-worldly 'music box' effects that straighter readings of Var 22 achieve, although his scrupulous articulation and attention to dynamics give

energy and drama to the final variations' cumulative momentum. However one ultimately responds to Barry Douglas's Brahms, his cycle will surely be fascinating to follow as it unfolds. **Jed Distler**

## Fauré

'Complete Piano Music, Vol 2'

Barcarolles – No 1, Op 26; No 2, Op 41; No 3, Op 42. Impromptus – No 1, Op 25; No 2, Op 31; No 3, Op 34. Nocturnes – No 1, Op 33 No 1; No 2, Op 33 No 2; No 3, Op 33 No 3; No 4, Op 36; No 5, Op 37; Three Romances sans paroles, Op 17

Jean-Claude Pennetier *pf*

Mirare Ⓢ MIR100 (78' • DDD)

## Fauré

Complete Barcarolles. Thème et variations, Op 73

Giulio Biddau *pf*

Aparté Ⓢ APO26 (80' • DDD)



### One-off Fauré from Italian Biddau and the continuation of Pennetier's cycle

Acknowledgement of Fauré's genius percolates slowly. And there are still knowing factions who dismiss him as a minor salon figure, a 'master of charms' (Debussy) and a composer addicted to 'vague perfume' (Michel Béroff). Such estimates suggest jealousy from France's greatest composer and ignorance elsewhere. Certainly Fauré's ambiguity has mitigated against him. Why bother with music of a 'subtle indirection' (to borrow a phrase from Henry James) when you can have an easy theatrical success in, say, the Liszt concertos?

In the present issues, Jean-Claude Pennetier gives us Vol 2 of his slowly unfolding complete Fauré. But his playing is altogether more cautious and circumspect than I remember from Vol 1 (12/08). Slowly and cruelly, the impression forms of a pianist who, ideally, should have recorded this music when still in his prime. To put it bluntly, Pennetier's limpness and lack of vitality does Fauré's subtle and radiant voice a disservice. Where is the 'chaste voluptuousness' of the Fifth Nocturne, and why does the Second Impromptu's whirling tarantella sound so staid and perfunctory – particularly when heard after Eileen Joyce's truly transcendental dexterity and brio (APR, 12/11)? Given such timidity, even the shortest pieces can seem endless.

Giulio Biddau, on the other hand, is altogether bolder, less inclined to play Fauré 'with the shutters down' (Fauré). In the Theme and Variations he can be sensitive as well as bracing, though he loses his poise in Var 9 (the one which Cortot compared to an evening star falling slowly from the sky). He is notably successful in the Fifth Barcarolle's tortuous rite of passage but, overall, too open-ended to

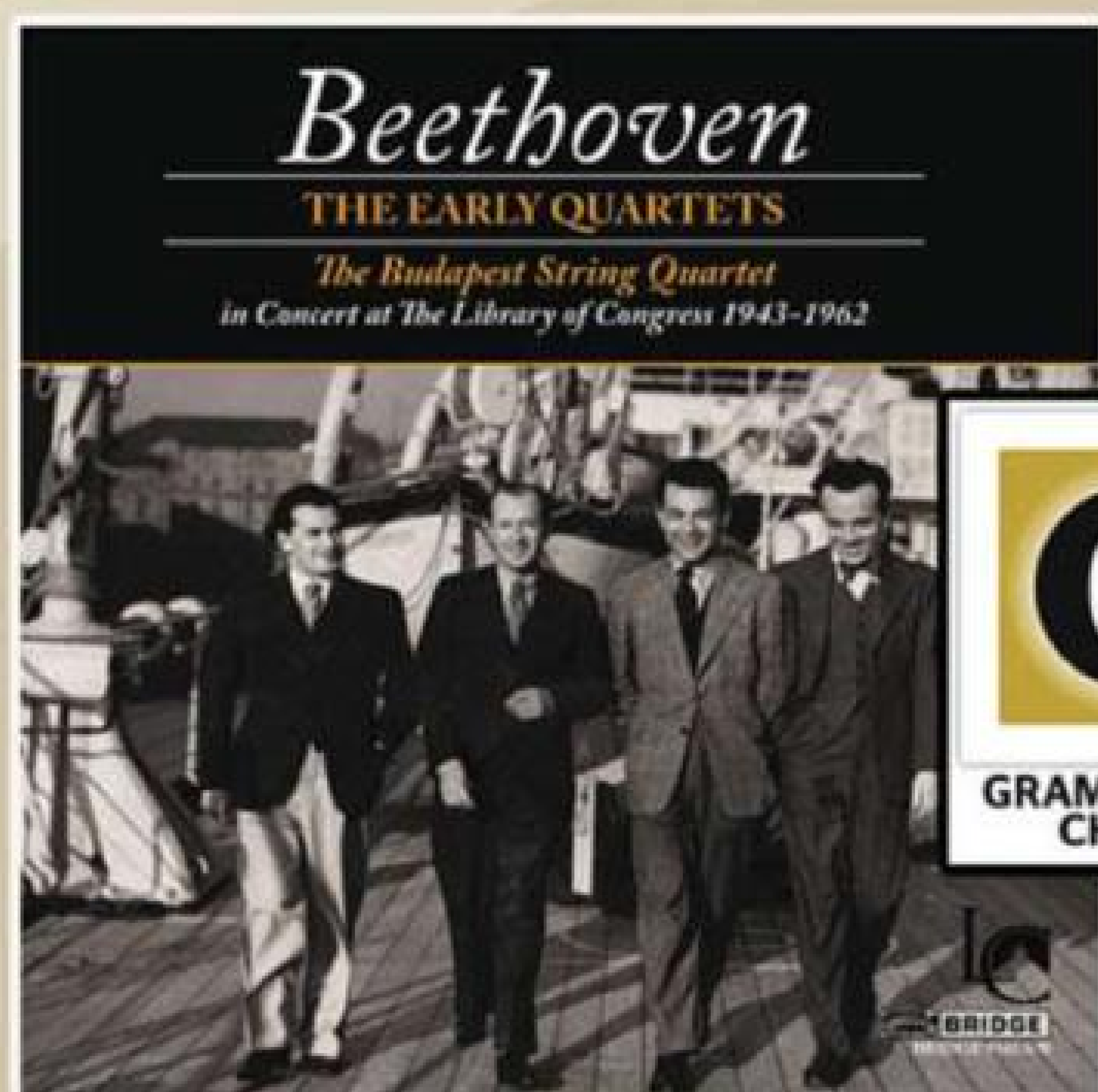


# Beethoven

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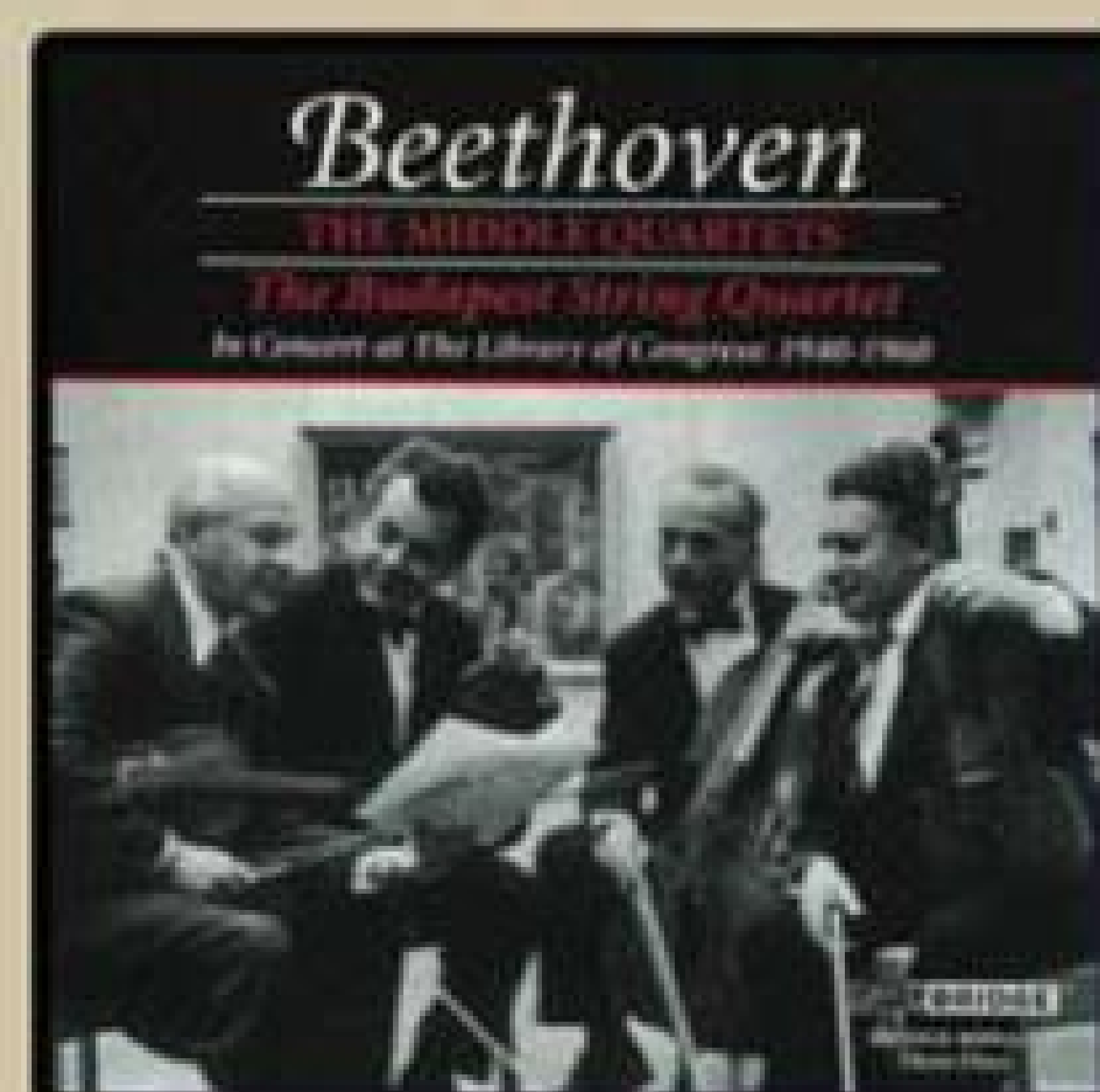
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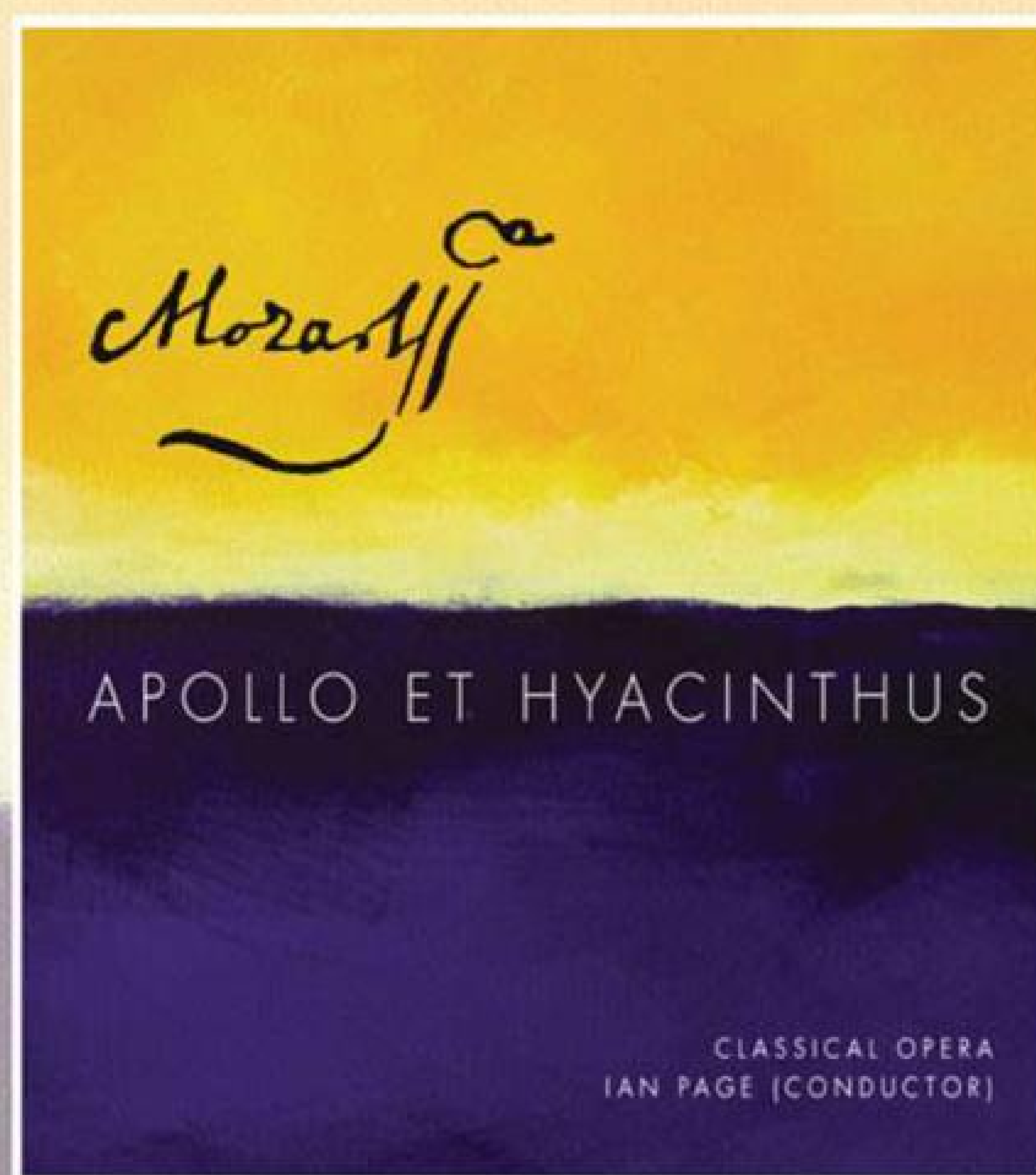
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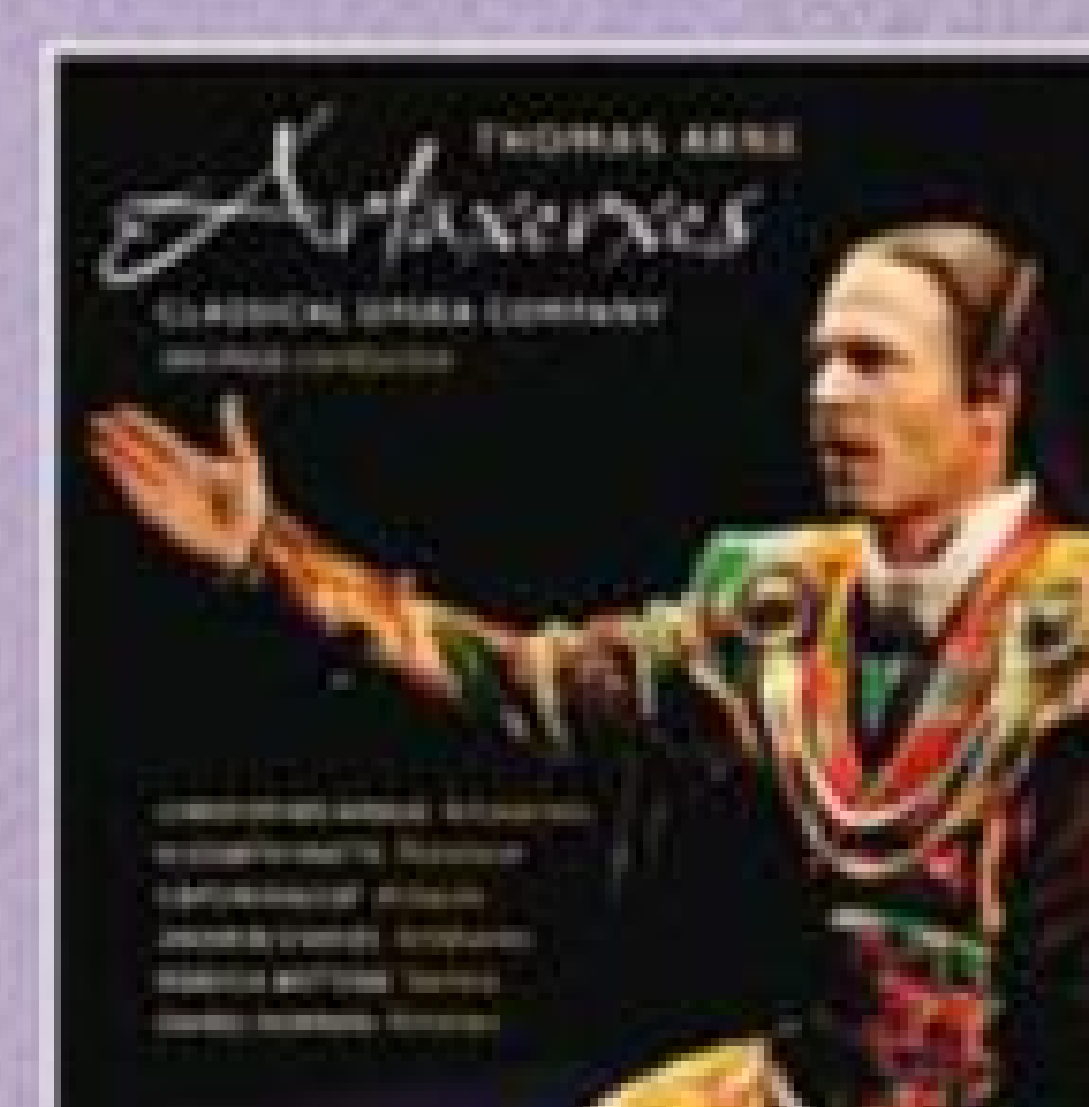
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realise fully the more recondite and crepuscular aspects of Fauré's art. All these works have been more successfully recorded by Jean-Philippe Collard (EMI), Kathryn Stott (Hyperion) and Paul Crossley (CRD), though none of these comes within distance of Germaine Thyssens-Valentin's wondrous pianistic finesse and poetic empathy (Testament). **Bryce Morrison**

## Mompou

'Piano Music, Vol 2 - Discoveries'

Impressions de muntanya. Dues Impressions. Impressions sobre la vida d'un miner. Impressions de La Garriga. Cinc Impressions. L'eco. Les hores. Fiesta triste. Dues Arabesques. Les amigues retornen del camp. Serious Fox-trot. Tango. Ball pla. Dues Cançons. Les fàbriques prop de la platja. Sis variacions, 'La cançó d'en Juamet'. El camí del jardí. Dos petits preludis. Montseny. Preludi. Cançó i dansa del pessebre. Record de platja. Variacions, 'Aura-Mazda'. Fox-trot. El plany del captaire. Camins de sorra. Dansa dels trest reis que han caigut del camell. Estanys de paper de plata. Pensements. El pont de Montjuïc. Romança. Moderato espressivo. Glossa sobre 'Au clair de la lune'. Fantasia sobre 'Au clair de la lune'. Preludes - XI; XII. Ballet. Perlimplinada

**Martin Jones** *pf*

Nimbus ® ③ NI5877 (166' • DDD)



### Jones's Mompou project offers three discs of 'discoveries'

As a rich and fascinating corollary, Martin Jones adds to his previous discs of Mompou's piano music another three-CD album entitled 'Discoveries.' Sheer enterprise could hardly go further and all these works, unpublished during the composer's lifetime, were only discovered as recently as 2008. A kaleidoscope of fragments and ideas, they tell us a lot about Mompou's working method, his work in progress, of first thoughts later crystallised in music such as *Impresiones intimas*, *Scènes d'enfants* and *Cants magics*. There Mompou partially satisfied his perfectionist craving for music where 'nothing is missing, nothing is superfluous' and his mystical feeling that he was not a composer but rather a vessel for thoughts that came to him from the beyond. And as Mompou's wife, the pianist Carmen Bravo, tells us, 'all of Mompou is the essence and nostalgia of moments from the past'. For Mompou it was a case of 'Paradise regained'.

All of these qualities have been superbly noted by Wilfrid Mellers in his study *Le jardin retrouvé* (Fairfax Press: 1989), where he confirms Mompou's love of the lyric and miniature, of Blake's aphorism that 'what is not great is always most minute'. The piano setting of the ballet *Perlimplinada* by Mompou and Montsalvatge is altogether more astringent in style and makes some lively virtuoso demands, met with unflagging brio and focus

by Martin Jones. Elsewhere, excellently recorded, he once again shows a total empathy for Mompou's subtle and elusive idiom. This is a valuable addition to his ever-expanding discography of Spanish music. **Bryce Morrison**

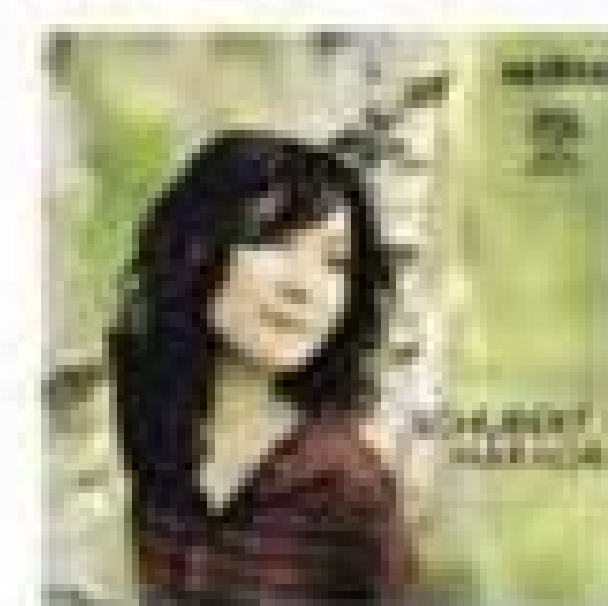
## Schubert

Fantasy, 'Wandererfantasie', D760.

Piano Sonata No 21, D960

**Hideyo Harada** *pf*

Audite ® ③ AUDITE92 575 (70' • DDD/DSD)



### Wanderer Fantasy from the Schubert Competition winner

A couple of years back I much enjoyed Hideyo Harada's disc of Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov (4/09). This release proves to be a far more mixed affair. She begins with the *Wanderer Fantasy*, revelling in the colouristic possibilities of its slow section, and proves more than equal to the work's considerable and frequently unpianistic technical demands. The final two sections prove more problematic: in the *Presto* her phrasing can become fussy, while her lack of a constant tempo is distracting. And, where the final fugue builds unassailably in the finest versions (Brendel and Richter would be my pianists of choice), Harada's acquires a dogged feel through overuse of slowings down, breaking up the momentum. So a mixed bag.

But it's in Schubert's final sonata that the real problems occur. It's a work that famously throws out the rulebook: tension, drama and brilliance are all rejected, replaced by writing that induces a kind of hypnotic state in the listener. At least, it does in a first-rate performance. This is what makes Schubert's late music so fragile, for it lives or dies by its performer. And in order to have that sense of hypnosis, of suspended animation over the vast spans of this work, the pianist has to set up and maintain some kind of steady tempo in this instrumental *Winterreise*. Otherwise Schubert the sleepwalker (to coin Brendel's phrase) wanders off into the forest. Harada is, alas, seemingly incapable of holding a speed for more than a bar at a time and her playing sounds tentative and lacking in line. She sounds as lost as we become during the next 22 minutes of Schubert's huge first movement. Though the *Scherzo* is not without moments of imaginative touch, it can't erase the memory of what has gone before. Unless you have a strong masochistic streak, then give this one a wide berth. And if you have, you can always amuse yourself with Richter's more heavenly lengths and continue the debate of whether his is an act of genius or mere perversion. **Harriet Smith**

*Wanderer Fantasy* – selected comparisons:

Richter (11/63\*) (EMI) 562960-2

Brendel (1/90\*) (DECC) 478 2638DH3

*Pf Son, D960* – selected comparison:

Richter (12/06) (BBCL) BBCL4196-2



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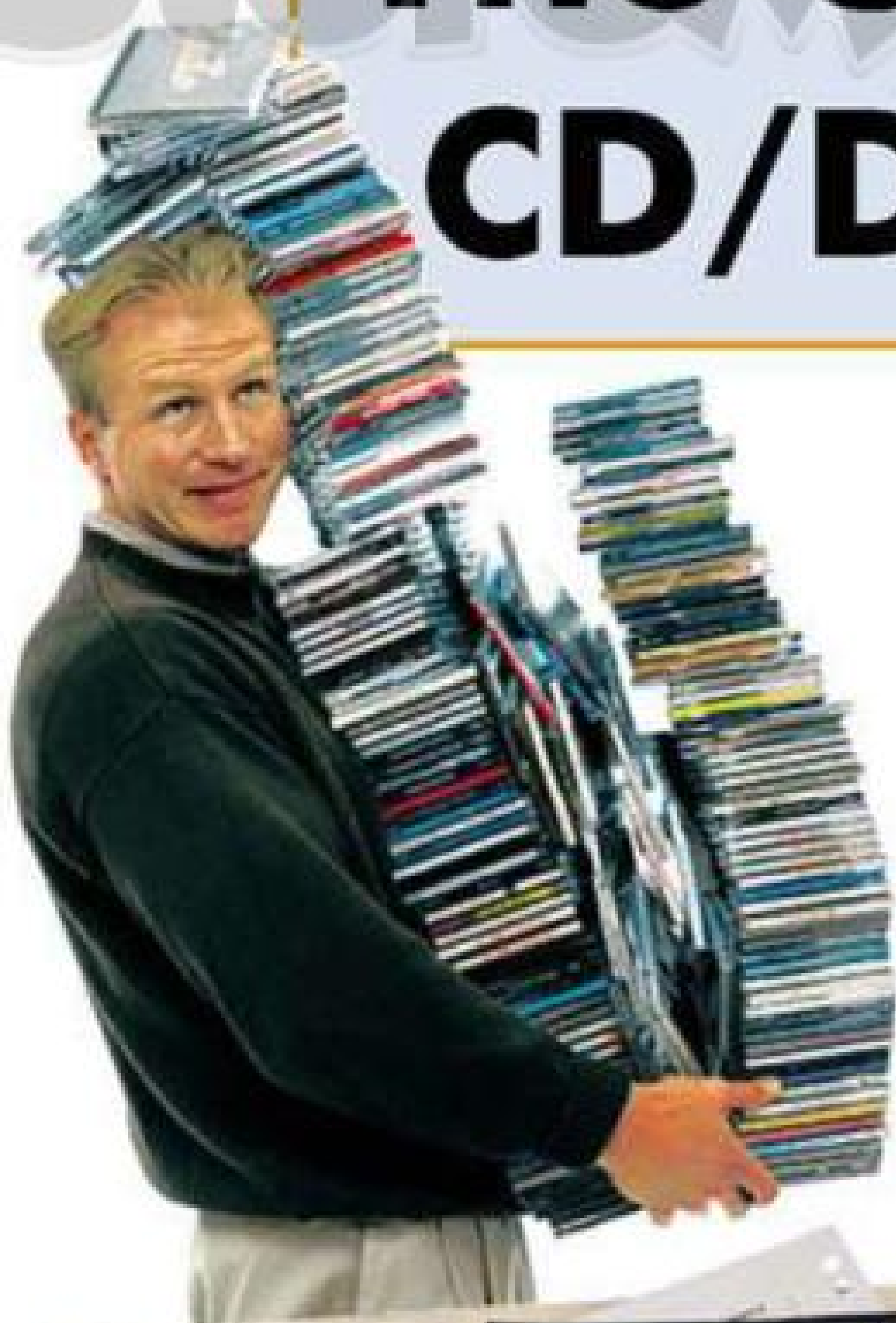
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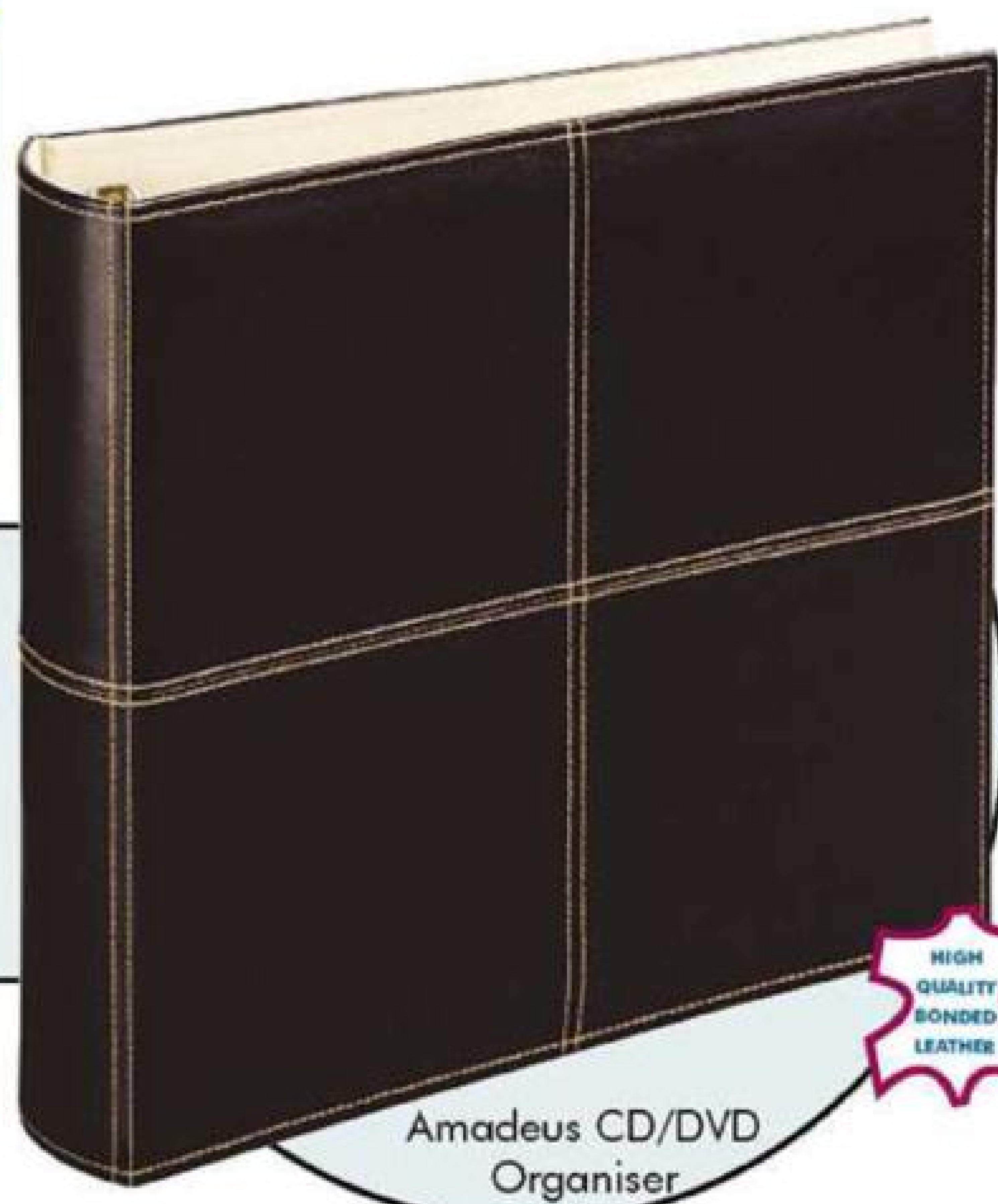
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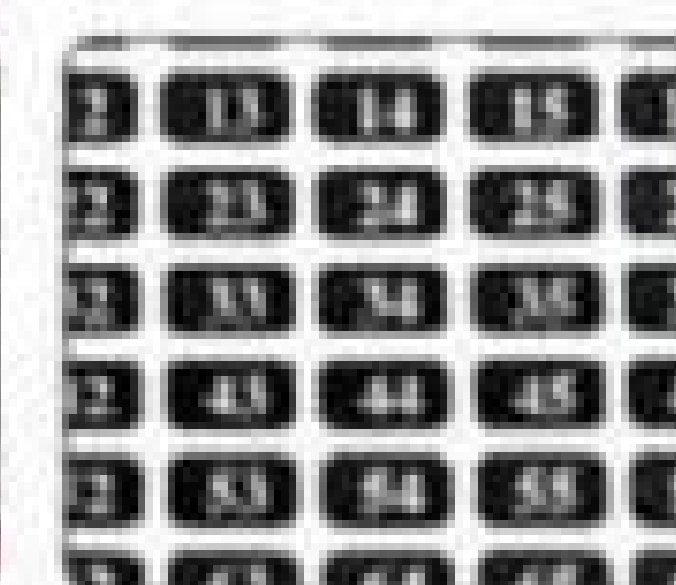
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## Scriabin

Twelve Etudes, Op 8. Six Preludes, Op 13.  
Five Preludes, Op 16. Piano Sonata No 10, Op 70.  
Vers la flamme, Op 72

Olli Mustonen *pf*

Online (F) ODE1184-2 (68' • DDD)



### The playing, conducting and composing Finn does Scriabin

An extraordinary pianist for extraordinary music. This is Scriabin as you have never heard him before, played by one of music's most formidable and compulsive free spirits. Had Stravinsky lived to hear Mustonen, he might well have asked with added emphasis, 'Scriabin, where does he come from, and who are his followers?'

The stress is very much on an original journey from the early Op 8 Etudes through the Op 13 and 16 Preludes to the obsessive circlings of the Sonata No 10 and the final conflagration of *Vers la flamme*. Yet, even in the Etudes, Mustonen's acetylene technique dazzles and astounds, fragmenting a Chopin-inspired lyricism into so many shards of glass. The music is made to leap flame-like and uncontained from the page and you could cut yourself on Mustonen's glittering sonority. Try the third Etude in B minor (*Tempestoso*), where Mustonen sets the cross-rhythms in jagged opposition, and you will hear a pianist of a truly astonishing force and individuality.

He may have raised eyebrows in his Beethoven discs but, in the volatility and dark musings of Russian Romanticism (Rachmaninov's First Sonata, Balakirev's *Islamey*), his originality defies comparison. Like Olivier, who could mesmerise the back row of an audience with a look, Mustonen's beady and dazzling pianism is truly hypnotic. He has been excellently recorded and I can hardly wait to hear him in, say, Ravel's *Gaspard de la nuit*. Few pianists have a more potent sense of the demoniac in music. **Bryce Morrison**

## Sergio Fiorentino

'The Berlin Recordings'

**JS Bach** French Suite No 5, BWV816. Partitas – No 1, BWV825; No 4, BWV828. Preludes and Fugues – BWV532; 'St Anne', BWV552. Solo Violin Partita No 3, BWV1006 – Gigue; Gavotte; Prelude (transc Rachmaninov). Solo Violin Sonata No 1, BWV1001 (transc Fiorentino) **Chopin** Piano Sonata No 3, Op 58 **Debussy** Suite bergamasque **Franck** Prélude, fugue et variation, Op 18 (arr Bauer). Prélude, choral et fugue. Prélude, aria et final **Liszt** Ballades – No 1, 'Le chant du croisé', S170; No 2, S171. Funérailles, S173 No 3. La leggerezza, S144 No 2. Piano Sonata, S178. Waldesrauchen, S145 No 1 **Prokofiev** Piano Sonata No 8, Op 84 **Rachmaninov** Piano Sonatas – No 1, Op 28; No 2, Op 36 **Schubert** Four Impromptus, D899. Piano Sonatas – No 4, D537; No 13, D664; No 21, D960

**Schumann** Fantasie, Op 17 **Scriabin** Piano Sonatas – No 1, Op 6; No 2, 'Sonata Fantasy', Op 19  
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Sergio Fiorentino *pf*

Piano Classics (S) (10) PCLM033 (11h 47' • DDD)

Recorded 1994-97



### Ten discs of Fiorentino at the dusk of his career

This 10-disc box is Piano Classics' most ambitious project to date, a tribute to a pianist who for many years was virtually 'without portfolio'. Fiorentino shunned the ever-increasing necessity for promotion and publicity so that his glory was eclipsed by lesser, more commercially savvy pianists. His early recordings, where he was presented by the infamous William Barrington-Coupe (husband of Joyce Hatto) under a variety of names (Auguste du Maurier, Paul Procopolis, etc), were characterised by an immense but undisciplined facility, making the stature of these Berlin recordings, made at the end of Fiorentino's life, all the more astonishing.

Wherever you turn you will encounter a human breadth and richness far removed from the often chilly aristocracy or *froideur* of Michelangeli and Pollini, his more celebrated compatriots. In Schubert you are reminded that, if for Keats 'ripeness is all', for Fiorentino naturalness is all. And, if he is arguably too benign or *gemütlich* in the Op 90 Impromptus (I am thinking of Paul Lewis's recent disc – Harmonia Mundi, 2/12), he is memorably responsive to the A major Sonata, D664, to its 'smiling lights and colours of a spring day'. He is no less superb in the A minor Sonata, D537, relishing its audacious and experimental nature.

Again, the sheer ease of his Chopin B minor Sonata leaves you lost in wonder: his *Scherzo* as 'light as a hairbell', his *Largo* rapt and communing. Then he is no less at home in heaven-storming Russian Romanticism, coming a close second to Boris Berezovsky's long-deleted disc of Rachmaninov's First Sonata. And if neither he nor anyone else compares with Van Cliburn's magisterial rhetoric in his live Moscow recording of the Second Sonata (VAI DVD), his version is among the finest of those who sadly prefer the later and truncated 1931 revision.

Fiorentino's Schumann *Fantasie* has all of his heartfelt eloquence (and what a fearless assault on the notorious skips at the close of the central march, the *locus classicus* of the wrong note). His way with the first of Liszt's two Ballades makes a masterly case for what is outwardly one of the composer's weaker works and his Sonata is among the finest on record, with the odd reinforced bass-line and emendation to suggest an endearingly old-fashioned affiliation. On the other hand, Fiorentino's Bach is purer and less

self-regarding than the often eccentric Gould and sometimes pedantic Rosalyn Tureck.

Finally, Fiorentino in Franck, where his unfaltering poise in the composer's incense-laden notion of the ineffable contradicts Cortot's mischievous reference to the 'church-worker' in Franck ('le côté artisan d'église'). He makes nonsense, too, of James Gibb's facetious assertion that in the Prelude, Aria and Finale, Franck's sequences have 'no more dramatic importance than the hitching up of one's trousers'. Quietly sustained, luminous and intense, Fiorentino's way with the Prelude, Chorale and Fugue, in particular, is fervent and glowing, and it is somehow typical of his lack of virtuoso vanity that he resists a tumultuous rush to the finishing post at the close of the Fugue. The recordings are excellent and Piano Classics includes moving and affectionate tributes to one of the greatest pianists of the last century.

**Bryce Morrison**

## 'Darknesse Visible'

Adès Darknesse Visible **Debussy** Suite

bergamasque **Ravel** Gaspard de la nuit. La valse

**R Stevenson** Fantasy on Peter Grimes

Inon Barnatan *pf*

Avie (F) AV2256 (69' • DDD)



### Cross-channel exploration of pianistic darkness and light

This is an account of *Gaspard* to live with as much as for its technical assurance as for the unsettling atmosphere of unease and malevolence with which the Israeli pianist Inon Barnatan infuses all three movements. Ravel's dynamic and agogic markings, so crucial to the success of the work, are meticulously observed; the opening pages of 'Ondine', where the hammer felts seem to just brush the strings, and the sinister repeated B flats of 'Le gibet' send a shiver up the spine. Does he characterise 'Scarbo' quite as vividly and with such lack of inhibition as Sergio Tiempo, Benjamin Grosvenor or Steven Osborne, to name three recent outstanding versions? Not quite.

Barnatan's colouristic mastery is again on show in the disc's eponymous 1992 piece by Thomas Adès. The title is a conflation of lines from Milton's *Paradise Lost* – 'Yet from those flames / No light, but rather darkness visible' – and Dowland's song 'In darknesse let me dwell', which Adès 'explodes' (the composer's description) in haunting, shimmering slow motion. Barnatan adopts a rounder, warmer tone for a relaxed view of *Suite bergamasque* but strives, I think, too much for effect in 'Claire de lune'.

Colour and atmosphere are again much to the fore in Ronald Stevenson's compelling *Fantasy on Peter Grimes* but Barnatan cannot be acquainted with the composer's matchless recording (APR, 2/06) which, at 7'00", is



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JULY 6 – AUGUST 19, 2012

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## Opera

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Directed by Thaddeus Strassberger  
Set design by Kevin Knight

This tale of Henri de Valois, a 16th-century French noble elected by the people of Poland to be their king, despite his great reluctance to be away from France, has been much praised for the quality of its music—indeed, no less a master than Maurice Ravel claimed that Chabrier's score changed the course of French harmony.

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a whole two minutes faster than here, to far greater cohesive and dramatic effect. That said, Barnatan pulls out all the stops for *La valse*, with the final pages' headlong rush into oblivion excitingly captured. Beautifully voiced piano, very well recorded. **Jeremy Nicholas**

*Gaspard de la nuit* – selected comparison:

*Tiempo* (7/06) (EMI) 558018-2

*Osborne* (4/11) (HYPE) CDA67731/2

*Grosvenor* (10/11) (DECC) 478 3206DH

## 'Fantasia'

**Albéniz Iberia** – Triana **Bizet/Horowitz Variations** on a Theme from Carmen **Chopin Waltz** No 7, Op 64 No 2 **Dukas/Staub** L'apprenti sorcier **Gluck/Sgambati** Mélodie (from Orfeo ed Euridice) **Rachmaninov Etudes-tableaux**, Op 39 – No 4; No 5; No 6. **Elégie**, Op 3 No 1 **Saint-Saëns/Liszt/Horowitz Danse macabre**, Op 40 **D Scarlatti Keyboard Sonata**, K455 **Schubert/Liszt Gretchen am Spinnrade**, D118/S558 No 8 **Scriabin Etude**, Op 8 No 9. **Poème**, Op 32 No 1. **Preludes**, Op 11 – No 11; No 12. **Prelude**, Op 13 No 6 **J Strauss II/Cziffra Tritsch-Tratsch-Polka**, Op 214 **Yuja Wang** *pf*  
DG © 479 0052GH (69' • DDD)



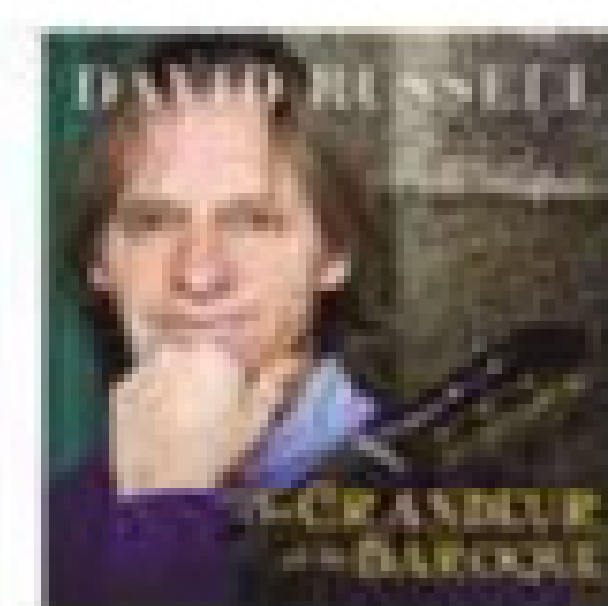
**DG's star pianist offers up her favourite encores**

Yuja Wang's 'Fantasia' may be a this-and-that recital (including lavish tributes to Horowitz and Cziffra, two of the 20th century's ultra-virtuosos) but whatever dazzles and delights is here in super-abundance. Wang is clearly one of the major talents of our time and her playing throughout is of an astonishing verve, style and dexterity. Hear her in Rachmaninov's A minor 'Red Riding Hood' Etude, Op 39 No 6, where, opening with a ferocious growl, she sets the stage for playing of extreme virtuosity. The E flat minor Etude from the same opus may seem speedy and lightweight when compared to Horowitz and Cliburn (at his most magisterial and heartfelt) and her way with Albéniz's 'Triana' may not class her among the Spanish piano aristocracy (Alicia de Larrocha, Luis Fernando Pérez, Esteban Sánchez and Rafael Orozco) but her Scarlatti is a glory of brilliance and piquancy.

In Victor Staub's arrangement of Dukas's *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* she runs the legendary Argerich/Rabinovitch two-piano disc a close second and her selection of early Scriabin is wondrously fiery and poetic as required. In the Saint-Saëns-Horowitz *Danse macabre* Wang storms the heights and her playing is of an unquenchable virtuosity. She herself declares all these pieces to be among her most cherished encores, and she has been superbly recorded in them. And those who also buy recordings for such things will be enchanted by DG's presentation: there are seven photographs of Yuja Wang. **Bryce Morrison**

## 'Grandeur of the Baroque'

**JS Bach Partita** No 6, BWV830 – Toccata. **Sinfonias** – BWV788; BWV791; BWV792; BWV797 **F Couperin Pièces de clavecin**, 26th Ordre – La Convalescente; La Sophie; L'Épineuse; La Pantomime **Handel Suite** No 7, HWV432 **Weiss Suite** No 14 **David Russell** *gtr*  
Telarc © TEL33223-02 (71' • DDD)



**Russell with Baroque lute and keyboard works transcribed**

Musicians of David Russell's taste and experience are like connoisseurs. When they perform a piece of music it's as though they're holding a netsuke or Meissen figurine up to the light and saying, 'There, look – see how nature is improved upon!' So it is with Russell's latest recording, featuring revelatory performances of Baroque keyboard and lute works by Bach, Handel, Couperin and Weiss transcribed for the classical guitar.

But why revelatory? An acclaimed exponent of Romantic and 20th-century Spanish and Latin American guitar music, Russell has also made regular trips back to the Baroque. To my ear, he has always made a good argument for performing works originally intended for one plucked-string instrument – the harpsichord – on another – the guitar. What you lose in reduction and transposition, you gain in tone colour, dynamic control and an intimacy that encourages a more ruthlessly efficient approach to structural delineation.

Russell opens with the Toccata from Bach's Partita, BWV830. The outer improvisatory sections are boldly realised and ringing with campanelas, the central fugue more reflective and dynamically complex. His account of four of Bach's three-part Sinfonias, which here form a quasi-suite, is the epitome of clarity, grace, humour and melancholy. Both the Handel and the Couperin are remarkable for evoking the harpsichord, particularly in the meticulously realised ornamentation, while fully exploiting the tonal range of the guitar; the Weiss, a longtime favourite of Russell's, is lovingly equally convincing, especially in the nuanced realisation of the profuse *style brisé* figurations *passim*. Overall? Playing that, unlike nature, could hardly be improved upon. **William Yeoman**

## 'Precipitando'

**Berg Piano Sonata**, Op 1 **Janáček In the Mists** **Liszt Piano Sonata**, S178 **Dénes Várjon** *pf*  
ECM New Series © 476 4585 (58' • DDD)



**Challenging sonatas for Várjon's solo debut on ECM**

Hungarian pianist Dénes Várjon has received much attention for his chamber music prowess, notably in collaboration with cellist

Steven Isserlis. Yet he's often recorded as a soloist, most memorably so in three Schumann discs released by Naxos in the 1990s. It is likely that Várjon's solo debut for ECM will attract a higher level of anticipation and scrutiny.

'Perhaps it is the lustre of Dénes Várjon's playing that lifts everything he performs here into a state of newness', writes Paul Griffiths in the first sentence of his booklet-notes. In reality, there's nothing new, unusual, surprising or quirky about Várjon's intelligent and technically shipshape interpretations of Janáček's *In the Mists* and both the Berg and Liszt Sonatas, and those desiring this particular grouping of works won't be disappointed.

Still, the pianist faces strong catalogue competition. Várjon's phrasing of the main theme of the first movement of the Janáček perfectly captures the music's speech-like syntax, as does András Schiff (also on ECM), albeit with a greater range of tonal inflection. But the intensity Várjon brings to the central climax borders on brittle and harsh, whereas Schiff and Piotr Anderszewski convey comparable momentum while allowing the phrases more breathing-room. In the Berg Sonata's central development section, Várjon pushes the close counterpoint relentlessly forwards, whereas Mitsuko Uchida's more measured pace and better-judged scaling of dynamics create a more convincing dialogue between the hands. To be sure, Várjon's Liszt Sonata holds its own in an impossibly crowded catalogue. Striking details include the pianist's phrase grouping of the exposition's celebrated octaves to emphasise harmonic motion, or the sustained calmness he conveys across the slow ascending scales in the extended quiet passage prior to the fughetta. On the other hand, Liszt's lyrical D major theme sounds rather matter-of-fact and businesslike when placed alongside Arrau or Hamelin. Similarly, the recapitulation's climactic octaves and gradual winding down elicits a stronger sense of exultation and more cogent long-lined shaping from Yundi Li, Yuja Wang, Arnaldo Cohen and George-Emmanuel Lazaridis, to name but a few recent versions. ECM's clear, attractive engineering offers a full-bodied, close-up and detailed piano sound, and also captures Várjon's frequent intakes of breath and vocal grimaces. **Jed Distler**

*Berg* – selected comparison:

*Uchida* (6/01) (PHIL) 468 033-2PH

*Janáček* – selected comparisons:

*Schiff* (7/01) (ECM) 461 660-2

*Anderszewski* (8/09) (VIRG) 267291-2

*Liszt* – selected comparisons:

*Li* (4/03) (DG) 471 585-2GH

*Cohen* (12/04) (BIS) BIS-CD1253

*Lazaridis* (10/06) (LINN) CKD282

*Wang* (8/09) (DG) 477 8140GH

*Hamelin* (5/11) (HYPE) CDA67760

*Arrau* (PLAN) PCLD0015



# Vocal



## Richard Wigmore reviews Esther from the Dunedin Consort:

*'Butt's direction combines spontaneous freshness with a care for expressive phrasing and precise colouring'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 77**



## Richard Fairman on an orchestral song recital from Renée Fleming:

*'Fleming's soprano soars and dips, hinting at great truths always just out of reach'*

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 83**

## Britten • Finzi

**Britten** *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings*, Op 31<sup>a</sup>. *Nocturne*, Op 60 **Finzi** *Dies Natalis*, Op 8

**Mark Padmore** *ten* <sup>a</sup>**Stephen Bell** *hn*

**Britten Sinfonia** / **Jacqueline Shave**

Harmonia Mundi (F) HMU80 7552 (78' • DDD • T/t)



### After a long wait, Padmore records Britten's *Serenade*

It has almost become a rite of passage for English tenors to record Britten's orchestral song-cycles. Mark Padmore has held off for longer than most but the wait has been worth it. These performances of the *Serenade* for tenor, horn and strings and the *Nocturne* are of the utmost sensitivity, skilfully accompanied by the Britten Sinfonia and recorded with tremendous presence.

'On a poet's lips I slept,' sings Padmore at the start of the *Nocturne*, and that is just how it seems in these intimate and poetic performances. From the opening Charles Cotton poem of the *Serenade*, spoken with perfect naturalness, to the Shakespeare sonnet that closes the *Nocturne*, the sense of the poems comes across with extra immediacy, as if Padmore has read the texts many times over before fitting them to the music. There is much beauty here – not perhaps in the purely vocal sense that one hears it in the sadly missed Rolfe Johnson (at times Padmore is holding at bay an incipient fast vibrato) but in the marriage of words and music, accompanied by clean and taut playing throughout from the Britten Sinfonia and, in particular, Stephen Bell, the horn soloist in the *Serenade*. The still authoritative Pears and Britten, by comparison, work on an altogether bigger scale.

Rather than completing the disc with *Les illuminations*, which is the obvious third choice, Padmore has turned to Finzi's *Dies Natalis*, to which he brings the same rapt concentration and verbal detail. This is again a lightly sung performance, helped by the way the Britten Sinfonia scales back where necessary, aspiring to the intimacy that distinguishes so much of this disc. Highly recommended. **Richard Fairman**

*Nocturne* – selected comparisons:

Rolfe Johnson, LMP, Glover (5/90) (ASV) CDDCA682

Pears, ECO, Britten (12/99) (BBCI) BBCB8013-2

*Serenade* – selected comparisons:

Pears, Brain, Boyd Neel Stg Orch, Britten

(12/45<sup>a</sup>) (DECC) 468 801-2DM

Rolfe Johnson, Thompson, Scottish Nat Orch, Thomson

(6/89<sup>a</sup>) (CHAN) CHAN10192

## Britten

*Songs and Proverbs of William Blake*. *Tit for Tat*.

*Folksongs* – *The Plough Boy*; *The foggy, foggy dew*;

*Tom Bowling*; *O waly, waly*; *Oliver Cromwell*;

*The Ash Grove*; *The Salley Gardens*; *There's none*

*to soothe*; *Little Sir William*; *Ca' the yowes*

**Roderick Williams** *bar* **Iain Burnside** *pf*

Naxos (S) 8 572600 (61' • DDD • T)



### Williams with Britten for 22nd disc in English song series

'This music has the power to connect the avant-garde with the lost paradise of tonality,' said Robin Holloway once about Britten. He might have been talking about this Blake set, a standout in Britten's still often underrated output of the 1960s, written for Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau after his contribution to the *War Requiem*. Peter Pears chose the texts from *Songs of Experience* and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. 'When I think of the wonderful words I feel rather inadequate', was the composer's comment. But they inspired him to a through-composed cycle with the seven Proverbs in ritornello form (using, rather like *The Turn of the Screw*, clusters of notes in a 12-tone scheme) and the poems drawing such unpredictable effects as 'Tyger, tyger, burning bright', accompanied almost entirely in the bass register.

Putting this new Roderick Williams recording immediately up against the composer and Fischer-Dieskau is like going from hymns ancient to hymns modern. Williams finds an ideal emotional stance – involved, totally word-conscious but never melodramatic. Fischer-Dieskau, perhaps because for all his intelligence he is not English, is always interpreting, falling on words to sell emotional points and colours in a way that often feels de trop for both Blake and Britten. There may be a thrilling live performance tucked away in an archive but, as a recorded recital, Williams – and Burnside, who is similarly colourful but keeps an interpretative

distance from pumping up the text – have created an outstanding achievement, one to set alongside the Gerald Finley/Julius Drake disc. Their remaining items, including *Tit for Tat* – Britten's 'reissue' of early 1929-31 Walter de la Mare settings – shine in a similar way. The Potten Hall recording is clean and clear with excellent instrument/voice balance. **Mike Ashman**

*Songs and Proverbs* – selected comparison:

Fischer-Dieskau, Britten (6/89) (LOND) 417 428-2LH3

Finley, Drake (7/10) (HYPE) CDA67778

## Chilcott

*Requiem*<sup>ab</sup>. *Salisbury Motets*. *Downing Service*<sup>b</sup>.

*Pilgrim Jesus*. *The Nine Gifts*<sup>b</sup>. *Jesus, springing*<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>**Laurie Ashworth** *sop* <sup>a</sup>**Andrew Staples** *ten*

**Wells Cathedral Choir**; <sup>a</sup>**Nash Ensemble** /

**Matthew Owens** *with* <sup>b</sup>**Jonathan Vaughn** *org*

Hyperion (F) CDA67650 (80' • DDD • T/t)



### The former King's Singer's sacred works from Wells

This disc of premiere recordings of music by one of the most popular British choral composers is dominated by the *Requiem* of 2010, a medium-length work, cast in seven movements and moulded firmly in the Fauré/Duruflé tradition. Largely reflective in nature (and eschewing the more vengeful and wrathful texts), Chilcott has drawn his inspiration from his time as a chorister at King's College, Cambridge. The 'Pie Jesu' is, naturally, given to a soprano (most eloquently sung by the angelic Laurie Ashworth), and there is also an important role for the tenor soloist in the *Offertorio*. This movement starts with an affectionate homage to Duruflé, and there are nods here and there to Howells and Rutter en route. Although this is music steeped in the Anglican mainstream, there is just enough of a French influence to prevent it from becoming anodyne and nebulous. Much of the music is slow and reflective with only a few major outbursts, most notably in the uplifting *Sanctus*. The addition of a wind quartet and timpani brings a freshness and piquancy to the timbral palette and blends beautifully with Jonathan Vaughn's superb organ-playing.

The finest of the quartet of motets is the turbulent 'When to the temple Mary went'.



The Wells choristers also excel in the 'Downing' *Mag* and *Nunc*, expertly written treatments of these well-loved canticles. The ending of the *Magnificat* is a stroke of pure genius. Matthew Owens draws impassioned and beautiful performances throughout this delightful disc. **Malcolm Riley**

## Debussy

'Songs, Vol 2'

Fêtes galantes, Set 1<sup>a</sup>. Proses lyriques<sup>b</sup>. Chansons de Bilitis<sup>a</sup>. Ariettes oubliées<sup>b</sup>. Trois Chansons de France<sup>a</sup>. Trois Poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Lorna Anderson, <sup>b</sup>Lisa Milne *sops*

Malcolm Martineau *pf*

Hyperion © CDA67883 (67' • DDD • T/t)



### Anderson and Milne for Part 2 of Martineau's Debussy project

Ranging from the early (but later revised) Verlaine settings in *Fêtes galantes* to the *Trois Poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé* of 1913, this seductive second volume of Hyperion's Debussy song series stops off at various points in the composer's creative life. The first thing to say is that the performances by sopranos Lorna Anderson and Lisa Milne are consistently beautiful, alert to the implications of Debussy's word-setting, whether ecstatic or subdued, and instinctive in the use of vocal colour to summon up poetic images and emotions. Malcolm Martineau matches them in the subtlety, characterisation and refined textures of his piano-playing, creating evocative miniatures that span a varied spectrum of sensations, some firmly fixed, others more elusive but all conveyed here with fluency and underpinned with meaningful expression.

In addition to the two sets of songs at either end of Debussy's life, there are the *Proses lyriques* of 1892-93 to words of his own, *Chansons de Bilitis* of 1895 to the sensual prose verses of Pierre Louÿs, the Verlaine settings *Ariettes oubliées* of 1903 and the three songs to poems by the 15th-century Charles Duc d'Orléans and 17th-century François Tristan l'Hermite in the *Trois Chansons de France* of 1904. Debussy's response to his diverse range of poets is both precise and captivating, features that these performances convey with a wonderful feel for the natural contours and flow of the vocal lines, crystallising incidents or states of mind along the way but with a spontaneity that speaks of thorough immersion in Debussy's idiom. **Geoffrey Norris**

## Delius

Songs of Sunset<sup>a</sup>. Three Songs (orch Holten)<sup>b</sup>.

North Country Sketches. A Late Lark<sup>c</sup>

<sup>abc</sup>Henriette Bonde-Hansen *sop* <sup>a</sup>Johan Reuter *bar*

<sup>a</sup>Aarhus Cathedral Choir; Aarhus Symphony <sup>a</sup>Choir and Orchestra / Bo Holten

Danacord © DACOCD721 (74' • DDD • T)



### Denmark's second city Aarhus salutes Delius

Delius had a lifelong devotion to Scandinavia and Scandinavian music, so it is apt that this issue should offer versions under the Danish conductor (and composer) Bo Holten of relatively rare Delius works in wonderfully idiomatic performances. *Songs of Sunset* is the major offering, well supplemented by three settings of Shelley in orchestrations by Holten himself, as well as by the separate song, 'A Late Lark', to words by WE Henley.

*Songs of Sunset*, setting eight songs to the words of the 'decadent' poet Ernest Dowson, makes a most satisfying sequence. It is especially effective that the sequence builds up to Dowson's most celebrated poem, with its memorable line 'They are not long, the days of wine and roses'. That is the briefest of the settings but the most moving, here making a glorious conclusion.

The three Shelley settings, 'Love's Philosophy', 'Indian Love Song' and 'To the Queen of My Heart', make a charming postlude, the more effective in Holten's tactful orchestrations, even if Delius's version of 'Love's Philosophy' cannot quite compare with Roger Quilter's version, recorded by Dame Janet Baker. Though the full English texts are given in the booklet, the first two are printed in the wrong order. After that, 'A Late Lark' rounds off the whole disc delightfully.

The one purely orchestral item is the set of four evocative *North Country Sketches*, each representing a season of the year. Understandably, Delius placed them not in chronological order but in a satisfying musical sequence, with the exuberant 'The March of Spring' as the final climax, after 'Autumn', 'Winter Landscape' and 'Dance' (of Summer). Here, as in all the items, Holten draws the most sympathetic performance from the orchestra, as he does from the singers. It is striking that his control of flexible *rubato* sounds so natural, with the choirs singing their hearts out. Fine as the baritone Johan Reuter is, the soprano Henriette Bonde-Hansen is even more impressive. First-rate atmospheric sound too.

**Edward Greenfield**

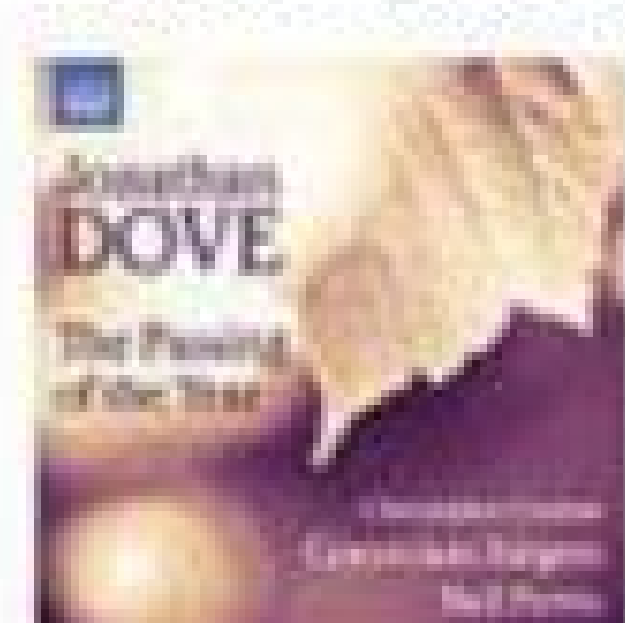
## Dove

The Passing of the Year<sup>a</sup>. In beauty may I walk. My love is mine. Who killed Cock Robin?. It sounded as if the streets were running. I am the day. Wellcome, all Wonders in one sight!. The Three Kings

Convivium Singers / Neil Ferris with

<sup>a</sup>Christopher Cromar *pf*

Naxos © 8 572733 (69' • DDD • T)



### Convivium with sacred and secular choral Dove

The Convivium Singers are a 30-strong mixed-voice group, formed in 2009, youthfully fresh-toned and evenly balanced. They tackle Dove's distinctive and vivid settings with great vigour and sense of purpose.

The major work on the disc, composed in memory of the composer's mother, is *The Passing of the Year* (2000). This sets seven texts, including poetry by Blake, Dickinson and Tennyson, the latter's 'Ring out, wild bells' being given a suitably wintry treatment. The combination of double chorus and piano (with Christopher Cromar providing solidly satisfying support) offers a wealth of textural and dramatic possibilities, most – if not all – of which are eagerly grasped by the composer. There are a few rough edges, including one major discomfort caused by a lapse in intonation, put into sharp relief by the fixed pitch of the piano, which could have benefited from another take. However, this is a major work which deserves to become a choral repertory mainstay.

The rest of the programme consists of unaccompanied pieces, one of the most appealing of which is the substantial Advent motet *I am the day*, a Spitalfields Festival commission, which includes a subtle hint of 'O come, O come Emmanuel'. Upper voices alone are put through their paces in *It sounded as if the streets were running* (three more Emily Dickinson settings). However, for sheer pleasure, the folksy solo *My love is mine* as sung with beguiling simplicity by Felicity Turner takes some beating. This is an enjoyable disc of approachable music by a master of choral writing. **Malcolm Riley**

## Elgar

The Dream of Gerontius, Op 38<sup>a</sup>.

Cello Concerto, Op 85<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Lilli Paasikivi *mez* <sup>a</sup>Mark Tucker *ten*

<sup>a</sup>David Wilson-Johnson *bass-bar* <sup>b</sup>Jian Wang *vc*

<sup>a</sup>Sydney Philharmonic Choirs; <sup>a</sup>TSO Chorus;

Sydney Symphony / Vladimir Ashkenazy

ABC Classics © ② ABC476 4297 (122' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Sydney Opera House, 2008



### Highlights from Ashkenazy's 2008 Sydney Elgar festival

During the autumn of 2008, Vladimir Ashkenazy devised a three-week Elgar festival with the Sydney SO, culminating in two performances of *The Dream of Gerontius* in the Concert Hall of the Sydney Opera House. Captured with floorboard-shaking amplitude by the ABC microphones, it's a considerable achievement. Not only is the feeling of a genuine event excitingly conveyed, Ashkenazy conducts with heaps of spirit, tingling drama and red-blooded commitment to the cause, and he draws an unstintingly fervent and laudably disciplined response from his massed cohorts.



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All that's missing, I feel, is the last ounce of vision, control and canny instinct that mark out, for example, both mono Sargent versions (Sir Malcolm's towering April 1945 recording for HMV was the first of the work in its entirety and remains the interpretative touchstone for yours truly), as well as those nourishing and much-loved stereo successors under Barbirolli (EMI), Britten (Decca) and Boult (EMI). While no match for the incomparable Heddle Nash on the 1945 Sargent, Mark Tucker sings with conspicuous ardour, but the voice acquires a distracting wobble and loses colour when under pressure. Both Lilli Paasikivi and David Wilson-Johnson, on the other hand, are excellent, though the former doesn't quite efface memories of Gladys Ripley (again for Sargent, and whose delivery of 'Softly and gently' really does move the listener to tears every time). Still, there's far more to extol than to moan about, and this certainly makes a worthwhile addition to the *Gerontius* discography.

The coupling is a marvellously sympathetic live performance of Elgar's Cello Concerto featuring the golden-toned Chinese virtuoso Jian Wang. Not only is he wholly attuned to the idiom, his gorgeously supple and consistently touching contribution has both innate good taste and notable depth of feeling to commend it. With Ashkenazy and the Sydney Symphony lending personable and attentive support, this has to be one of the most communicative accounts of Elgar's masterpiece to have come my way in recent years and represents the icing on the cake of an undeniably attractive package.

**Andrew Achenbach**

*Gerontius – selected comparisons:*

Liverpool PO, Sargent, r1945 (2/94) (TEST) SBT2025

Liverpool PO, Sargent, r1955 (5/55<sup>R</sup>) (EMI) 585904-2

Hallé Orch, Barbirolli (10/65<sup>R</sup>, 12/89<sup>R</sup>) (EMI) 391978-2

LSO, Britten (3/96) (DECC) 448 170-2DF2

New Philb, Boult (1/99) (EMI) 566540-2

## Handel

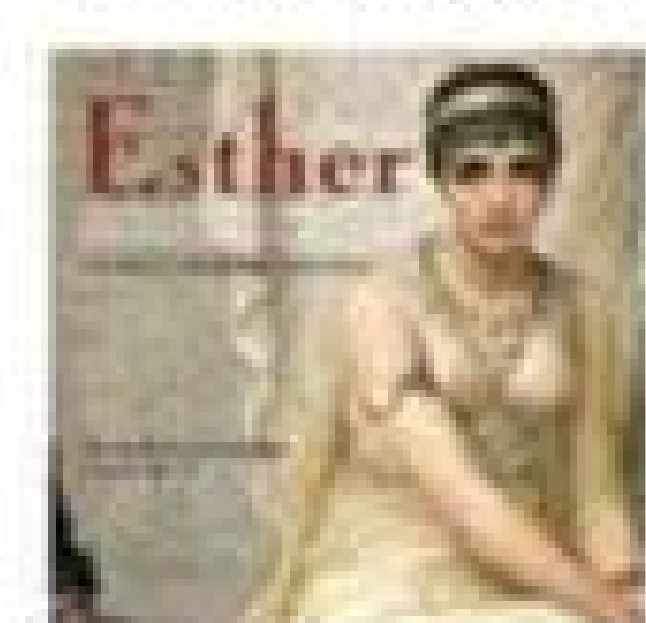
*Esther* (Cannons version, 1720)

**Susan Hamilton** *sop* **Robin Blaze** *counterten*

**Thomas Hobbs, James Gilchrist, Nicholas Mulroy** *tens*

**Matthew Brook** *bass* **Dunedin Consort / John Butt**

Linn ② ③ CKD397 (100' • DDD/DSD)



Dunedin Consort record the second incarnation of *Esther*

Somewhere between a masque and a fully fledged oratorio, *Esther* is a problematic work. John Arbuthnot's adaptation of Racine's play is ill-proportioned and leaves too many lacunae in the narrative, while Handel's music, liberally pilfered from his *Brookes-Passion*, can mesh uncomfortably with character and action. After the intimacy of the first two acts, the brass-festooned splendour of the Jewish

choruses in Act 3 seems to belong to a different work. In a way it does. Recent research by John Roberts has revealed that *Esther* went through two stages: a version of 1718, now lost, composed for the same chamber forces as *Acis and Galatea*; and an expanded revision of 1720, taking advantage of the newly enlarged forces at Cannons, the Duke of Chandos's Palladian mansion in what was then rural Edgware.

Whatever its faults as drama, *Esther* does contain some superb music, especially for the chorus and the characters who most fired Handel's imagination: the Persian King Assuerus (married to the Jewess Esther) and his henchman Haman, intent on a Jewish massacre. For this recording John Butt has drawn on Roberts's research to create an edition that differs in various minor ways from the versions recorded by Hogwood and Christophers. Inter alia, the action is, convincingly, divided into three acts rather than six scenes, and a flute, indicated in Handel's autograph, is added to the harp obbligato in the aria 'Praise the Lord'. As on his recordings of *Acis and Galatea* (1/09) and *Messiah* (12/06), Butt's direction combines spontaneous freshness with a care for expressive phrasing and precise colouring. The 11-strong chorus – the solo cast plus reinforcements – is vital and incisive, packing a fair punch even in the ceremonial final chorus.

Of the soloists, James Gilchrist's characteristically intense, involved Assuerus and Matthew Brook's baleful Haman are at least a match for their counterparts on the rival recordings. Indeed, Brook's noble singing of Haman's (futile) plea for mercy to Esther and his admonitory final aria give the oratorio's villain a near-tragic grandeur. Thomas Hobbs sings 'Tune your harps' gracefully, abetted by the eloquent oboist Alexandra Bellamy; and the more robust, baritonal Nicholas Mulroy makes his mark in Mordecai's solo. Robin Blaze, though, sounds off form as the Priest. More seriously, Susan Hamilton's shallow, girlish tones are simply inadequate for Esther's vehement riposte to Haman's plea for his life. Any venom here comes courtesy of the strings. So much in Butt's carefully prepared performance feels exactly right. Yet reservations about Blaze and, especially, Hamilton tip my preference towards either of the rival versions, with Christophers shading it for his superior choral singing and more even cast of soloists. **Richard Wigmore**

*Selected comparisons:*

AAM, Hogwood (12/85<sup>R</sup>) (DECC) 475 6731DC8

Sixteen, Christophers (3/96<sup>R</sup>) (CORO) COR16019

## Howells

Behold, O God our Defender. A Sequence for St Michael. Evening Service, 'Chichester Service'. Take him, earth, for cherishing. Requiem. Te Deum **Gloriae Dei Cantores / Elizabeth C Patterson** **Gloriae Dei Cantores** ② GDCD053 (68' • DDD)

## Howells



A Hymn for St Cecilia<sup>a</sup>. Salve regina. Evening Services – 'Gloucester Service'<sup>b</sup>; 'St Paul's Service'<sup>a</sup>. Take him, earth, for cherishing. Requiem. All my hope on God is founded<sup>b</sup>

**Choir of Trinity College, Cambridge / Stephen Layton**

with <sup>a</sup>Simon Bland, <sup>b</sup>Jeremy Cole *org*

Hyperion ② CDA67914 (64' • DDD • T/D)



Requiem, canticles and the JFK memorial anthem from both sides of the Atlantic Will only male choirs do for Howells's sacred music? So previous commentators have insisted, though only the most rigid epigone would say the same for the cantatas of Bach. By the same token, well-enunciated American English isn't out of place, especially when the Massachusetts-based Glorae Dei Cantores sing a work written for Washington National Cathedral – a late and unfinished *Te Deum*, at that, and like the Dallas canticles more tonally stable than their earlier counterparts written for English cathedrals. Much as I welcome John Buttrey's completion of this gently persuasive setting, my reservation is more basic and concerns breadth of tone. Parallel semitones (the opening of the Chichester *Magnificat*), simple psalms (No 23 from the Requiem) and bold unisons (in the *Te Deum*) don't make the intended effect and stray perilously away from the note (too often under it, in the case of the sopranos) when the vibrato is wide and the recorded balance diffuse. Unless you're in the middle of this music, singing it, you can often strain to catch the details, whether heard on record or in church, and the wide dynamic range required can be more help than hindrance.

Hyperion's disc, then, is all the more impressive for dispelling the clouds of dissonance that have given Howells the bad name of a meandering mystic and letting us hear what a fine ear he had, not just for the juicy suspension or overpowering cadence but for deft two-part harmony, as one finds throughout the understated Gloucester Canticles. The choir of Trinity College, Cambridge, is ideally pure and full in tone. The grand hymns and canticles are extrovert and focused, the intimate supplications such as *Take him, earth* sung with great poise. Comparisons can flatter to deceive but, by the side of the Trinity choir's Requiem, the Choir of St John's sounds too quick, the Vasari Singers too distant, the Cambridge Singers a little plain; even my previous favourite, the Corydon Singers, don't alight on chords with quite the full and alert appreciation of what makes Howells Howells, that impassioned, modally inflected application to the personal and the numinous which reminds me more of





Taped Howells: singers from Trinity College, Cambridge, recording in Lincoln Cathedral

Bruckner than Stanford. How good it is to hear the *St Paul's Service* not swallowed up by the dome of that cathedral but still buttressed by a mighty Willis beast, belonging in this case to Lincoln. In a recital of many highlights, I have returned again and again to the St Paul's *Nunc dimittis*: spaciouly paced and surely directed towards a *ritardando* of almighty breadth more associated with the ambivalent Catholic Mahler than the equally ambivalent Protestant Howells. This is a perfect disc of its kind.

**Peter Quantrill**

*Requiem – selected comparisons:*

*Corydon Sgrs, Best (10/87) (HYFE) CDA66076*

*Cambridge Sgrs, Rutter (12/92) (CLGM) COLCD118*

*Ch of St John's Coll, Cambridge, Robinson (1/00) (NAXO) 8 554659*

*Vasari Sgrs, Backhouse (4/04) (SIGN) SIGCD503*

## Lassus

Hor qui son lasso. Poi ch'el camin. En espoir vis et crainte me tourmente. Las, voulez vous qu'une personne chante. Quando'l voler. Del freddo Rheno. Audi dulcis amica. Inclina Domine. O occhi manza mia. Quel chiaro sol. Vostro fui. Non ha tente serene. Fremuit spiritus Jesu. Heu mihi Domine. Peccavi quid faciam tibi

**Ludus Modalis / Bruno Boterf** *ten*

Musique en Wallonie © MEW1158 (56' • DDD • T/U)



## Normandy ensemble begin Lassus series

Lassus's biography certainly lends itself to the multi-volume series promised here: there's incident, truculence, pathos at the end, and a constant outpouring of music that's reminiscent of the very greatest of later, more famous composers. As a first instalment, here is an opportunity to hear works of Lassus's pre-Munich days, from his early twenties. Most of the pieces recorded here are taken from his very earliest publications, including the first books of madrigals and motets published in 1555 and 1556. Highlights include two extended *sestina* settings and the monumental-sounding motet *Fremuit spiritus Jesu*, which sees Lassus take on Clemens non Papa, one of his most illustrious older contemporaries. As though to round off the portrait comes a song in the Neapolitan style, its rough edges barely smoothed.

The one-to-a-part mixed vocal ensemble Ludus Modalis is new to me and the booklet says nothing about them beyond their names; but its director, the tenor Bruno Boterf, has had a distinguished career, having sung with ensembles such as Clément Janequin. Using sopranos on the top lines and a countertenor

for the altus gives a fresh, immediately appealing sound, and the recorded sound is very close – perhaps too close, leaving little room for error, any hint of insecurity exposed. Perhaps these singers will grow in confidence with subsequent instalments, for just at present the rigidity of the beat in the madrigals or the prosaic approach to repeated phrases and ideas suggests a group of singers that's still tentatively feeling its way. **Fabrice Fitch**

## Pärt

'Creator Spiritus'

Veni Creator. The Deer's Cry. Psalm. Most Holy Mother of God. Solfeggio. My heart's in the highlands. Peace upon you, Jerusalem. Ein Wallfahrtslied. Morning Star. Stabat mater

**Theatre of Voices; Ars Nova Copenhagen /**

**Paul Hillier** with **Christopher Bowers-Broadbent** *org*  
**NYVD Quartet**

Harmonia Mundi © HMU80 7553

(75' • DDD/DSD • T/U)



## Hillier's choirs combine for the maestro's Fifth Pärt recording

Arvo Pärt has amassed over 50 works for accompanied or unaccompanied choir over the years. Seven of them are included on this impressively packaged disc featuring the



Theatre of Voices, Ars Nova Copenhagen and the NYXD Quartet, directed by Paul Hillier.

Both vocal and instrumental forces are brought together in the bone-chilling, claustrophobic *Ein Wallfahrtslied* ('Pilgrims' Song') and the more expansive *Stabat mater*, which rounds off the recording. The use of string quartet in both works rather than the usual string orchestra lends a more intimate and personal quality. It also provides greater balance between the voices and instruments, as heard in the slowly falling steps at the beginning of the *Stabat mater*.

Theatre of Voices have lived and breathed Pärt's music for over two decades but it is perhaps the warmth and beauty of the voices of Ars Nova Copenhagen that is most immediately striking here. Their interpretation of *The Deer's Cry*, a setting of St Patrick's chant, remains restrained until it bursts into life some two-thirds in, before falling back to the simple opening statement via an almost barbershop sequence of chords. Not the Pärt that we have come to expect, maybe; but there exists far more variety in this music than he is often given credit for. Indeed, Pärt's setting of Robert Burns's 'My heart's in the highlands' is something of an understated highlight, with Else Torp's motionless lines wonderfully complemented and supported by Christopher Bowers-Broadbent on organ. Hillier comments that Pärt 'draws such powerfully expressive music directly out of the rhythms and forms of the text...almost as if the words have composed the music'. Such affinities between sound and word are certainly drawn to the surface on this excellent disc.

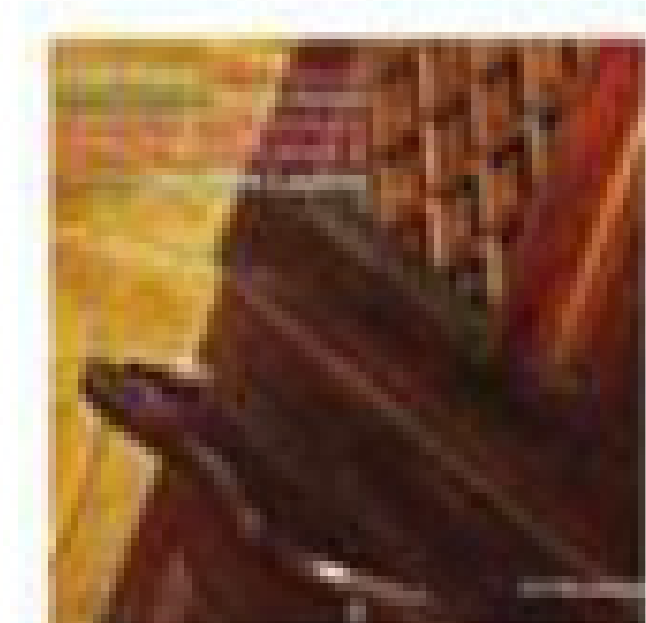
Pwyll ap Siôn

## Poulenc

'Half Monk, Half Rascal'

Sept chansons. Quatre petites prières de Saint François d'Assise. Ave verum corpus. Un soir de neige. Laudes de Saint Antoine de Padoue. Chansons françaises. Chanson à boire

Danish National Vocal Ensemble / Stephen Layton  
OUR Recordings © 8 226906 (56' • DDD)



Layton and the DNVE follow Prauliņš with Poulenc

The Danish National Vocal Ensemble face some pretty stiff competition with this disc of unaccompanied Poulenc but they do not just hold their own; they sweep a lot of it aside. Under Stephen Layton's perceptive and often inspired direction, they capture the essential dichotomy of Poulenc's writing as encapsulated in the title of the disc, a translation of the famous quote by Claude Rostand.

Layton has shown his exceptional affinity with the music of Poulenc before – notably with Polyphony (Hyperion, 4/08) – and it shines through every nuance here.

The lightning changes of mood, the abrupt transformations from the boisterous to the intimate and, of course, the unsettling switching between prayerful and playful are brought across with complete composure, and what might come across as an awkward juxtaposition of unrelated ideas becomes a natural progression of ingenious musical invention never blunting its highly distinctive edge. Poulenc's music is always fresh and invigorating; Layton merely refreshes it for our ears.

Exquisitely turned phrases and superbly poised melodic lines, be they the pseudo-chanting of the lonely tenor and the magically monk-like male chorus in the last of the *Prières de Saint François d'Assise* or the vertiginous screech of the soprano, more monkey than monk, in 'Luire' (from the *Sept chansons*), bring a sense of coherence to a programme in which the longest of the 29 tracks only slightly overruns the three and a half-minute mark.

On absolutely top form, the choir fluidly switches between the highly charged energy of the breathlessly galloping 'Marie', with its captivatingly subtle harmonic switches, and the ethereally floating quietude of *Ave verum corpus* with absolute assurance. If a highlight has to be identified, for me it would be the sumptuously voluptuous account of *Un soir de neige*. Coupled with a beautifully atmospheric recording and interesting notes (disturbingly printed on a pink background), this is a one-disc Poulenc compendium no Poulencophile should be without.

Marc Rochester

## Schnittke

Penitential Psalms. Voices of Nature<sup>a</sup>

SWR Vocal Ensemble, Stuttgart / Marcus Creed with

<sup>a</sup>Jochen Schorer vib

Hänssler Classic © SACD93 281 (55' • DDD/DSD)



Schnittke's singular technique in choral clothes

In his 1968 essay 'Choral Music and False Consciousness', Theodor Adorno declared that 'the conviviality of the choir engenders an artificial warmth'. He was essentially pressing the point that choral music not, as he put it, 'worked out with full compositional force' conveyed 'something illusory' within its fabric, as in the tendency of (some) composers to get off on a sentimental attachment to the worthiness of the choral tradition, an idea which ought to blare out from the front of all Eric Whitacre and John Tavener CDs like the health warning on a packet of fags.

To be honest, I doubt whether Adorno would have liked Alfred Schnittke's *Zwölf Bussverse* ('12 Penitential Psalms') much either, but hearing Schnittke grapple with the aesthetic problems he identifies, then fixing

them through his smart compositional nous and the alertness of his aural imagination, is a reminder of why philosophers are great but (some) composers are better. Written in 1988 to mark the thousand-year anniversary of Russia's Christianisation, Schnittke achieves a whole lot more than a mere reheat of the Russian Orthodox and Gregorian chant traditions; he occupies this music, infiltrating its sound world with concepts of line, harmony, scale and structure clearly imported from his concert music.

And so the authentic model is overlaid with the sound of its own historical resonance. Schnittke plundered an anthology of 16th-century Russian writings for text and from the get-go his freefall chromatic tumble forces open space between 'then' and 'now'. The SWR Vokalensemble Stuttgart's animated cry stresses the unsettled and exploratory disposition of Schnittke's harmony; there's nothing 'illusory' here. As the third piece meditates upon 'God's wrath', it collapses inside a slagheap of clustered, distended triads – again the chiselled lucidity of the performance heightening the impact. The sixth piece catches up with the future with a polyphony of polyphonies, Schnittke's freely woven counterpoint pointedly placed after the fifth setting's tonal affirmation. The final psalm, like the pairing, *Stimmen der Natur*, stretches glacially evolving harmonies over a grand scale – full compositional force, full steam ahead.

Philip Clark

## Striggio • Benevoli • Corteccia

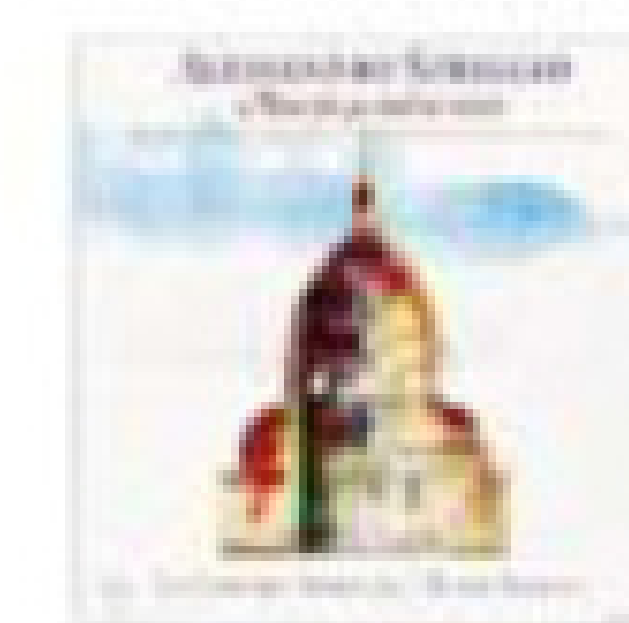


Anonymous Beata viscera (plainchant)

Benevoli Laetatus sum. Miserere. Magnificat  
Corteccia Bonum est confiteri Domino. Gloria Patri.  
Alleluia. Tu puer propheta altissimi Striggio Missa  
sopra Ecco sì beato giorno. Ecce beatam lucem

Le Concert Spirituel / Hervé Niquet

Glossa © GCDSA921623 (64' • DDD • T/t)



After Hollingworth, now Niquet does the big Striggio

I Fagiolini's disc of Striggio's works for 40 voices (on which the Mass *Ecco sì beato giorno* was given its premiere recording) won last year's Gramophone Early Music Award and was widely applauded. Hot on its heels comes another with a strikingly contrasted approach. Eschewing the more variegated plumage of Robert Hollingworth's ensemble (in which strings and lighter winds predominate), Hervé Niquet and Le Concert Spirituel opt for a fatter, bolder sonority, with 40 singers supported by over a dozen instrumentalists playing cornets,



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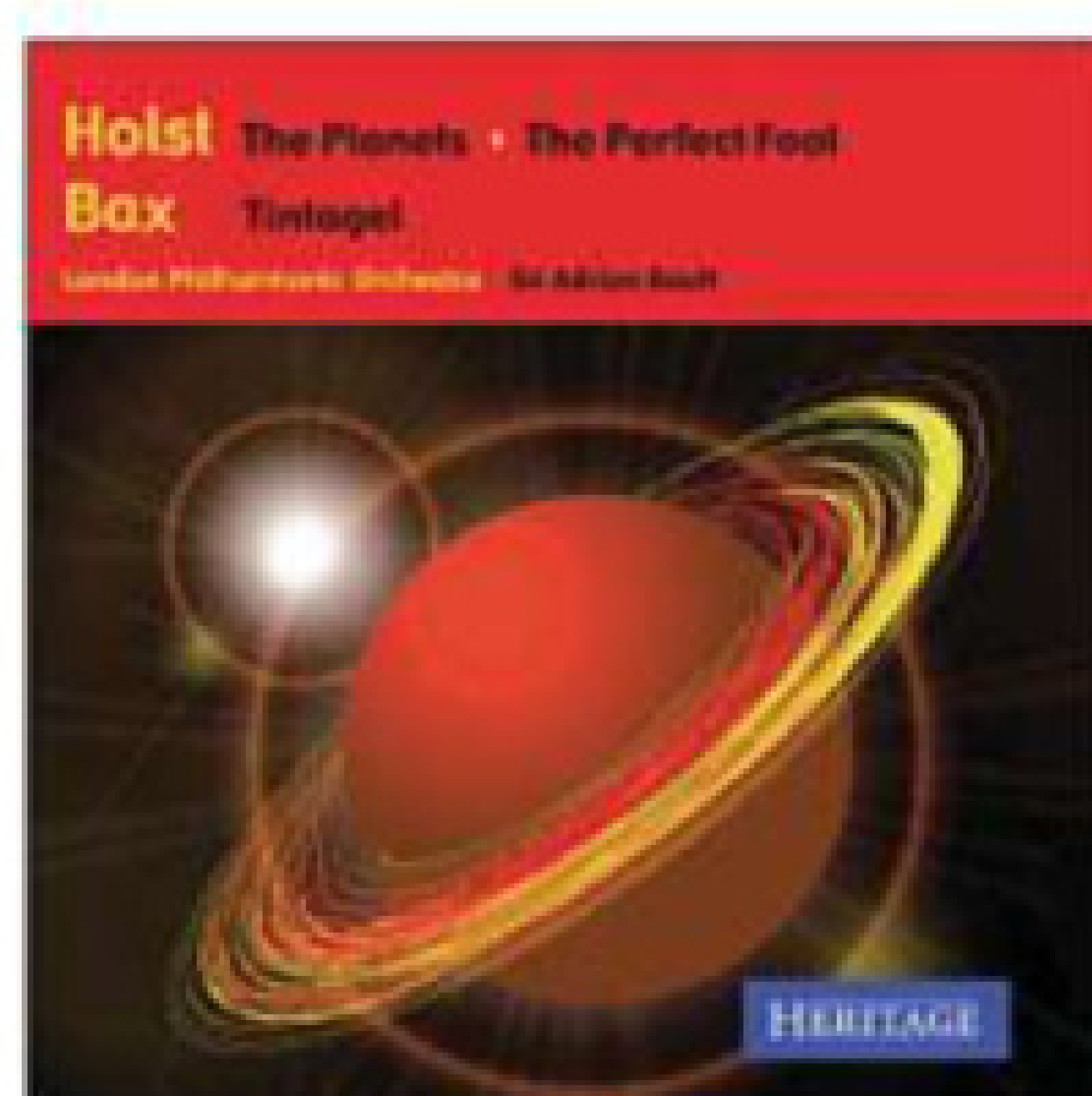
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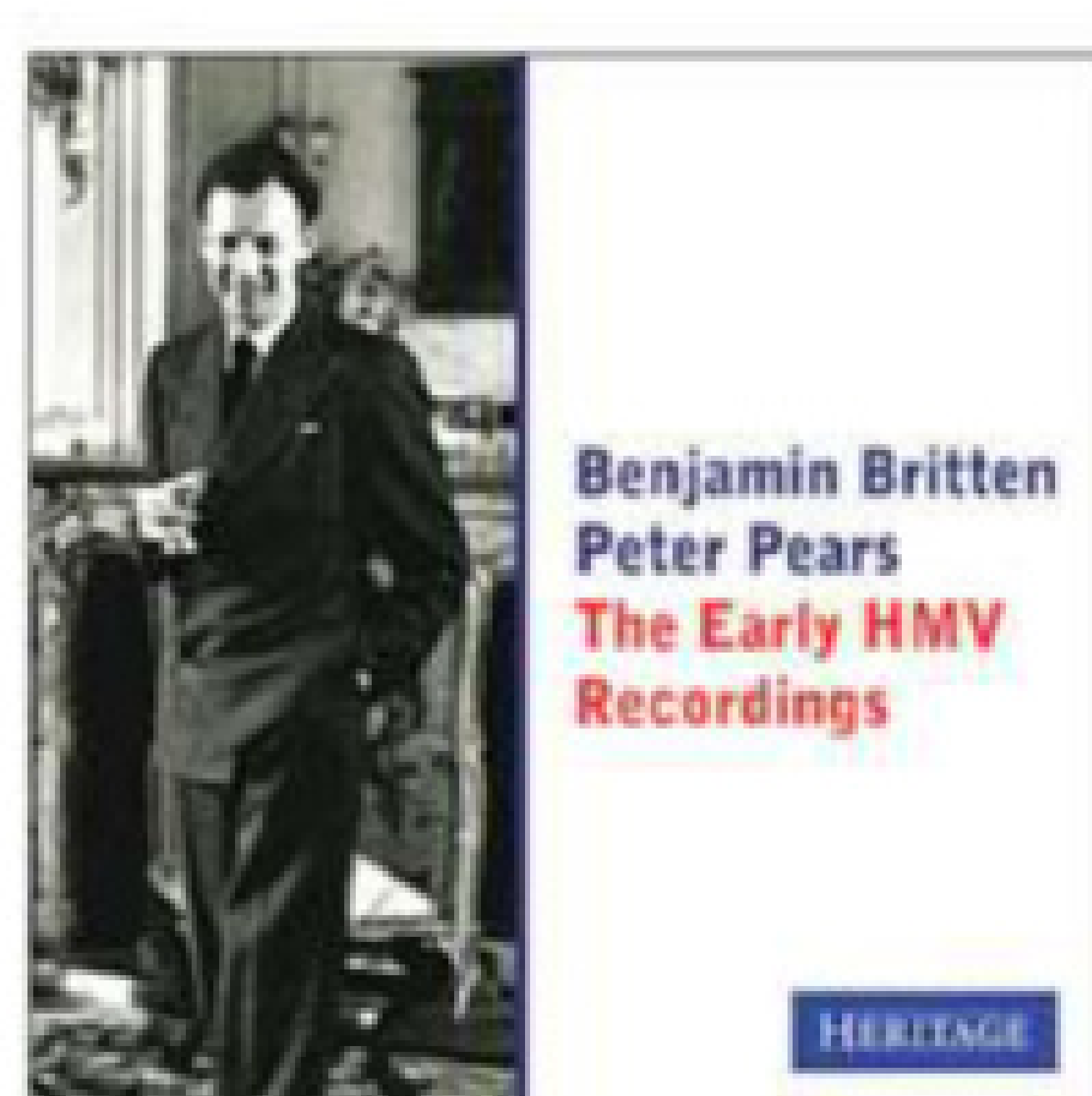
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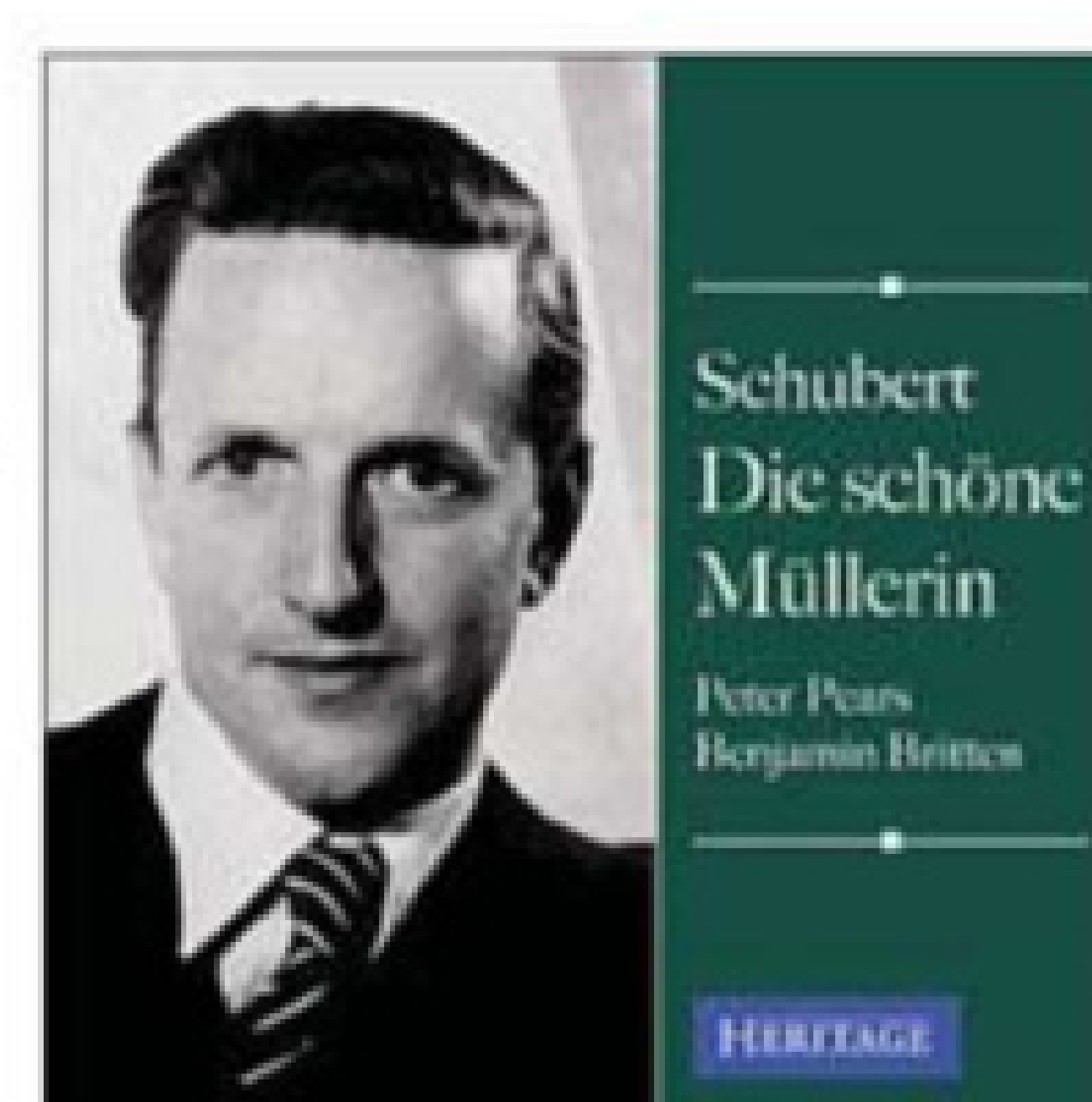
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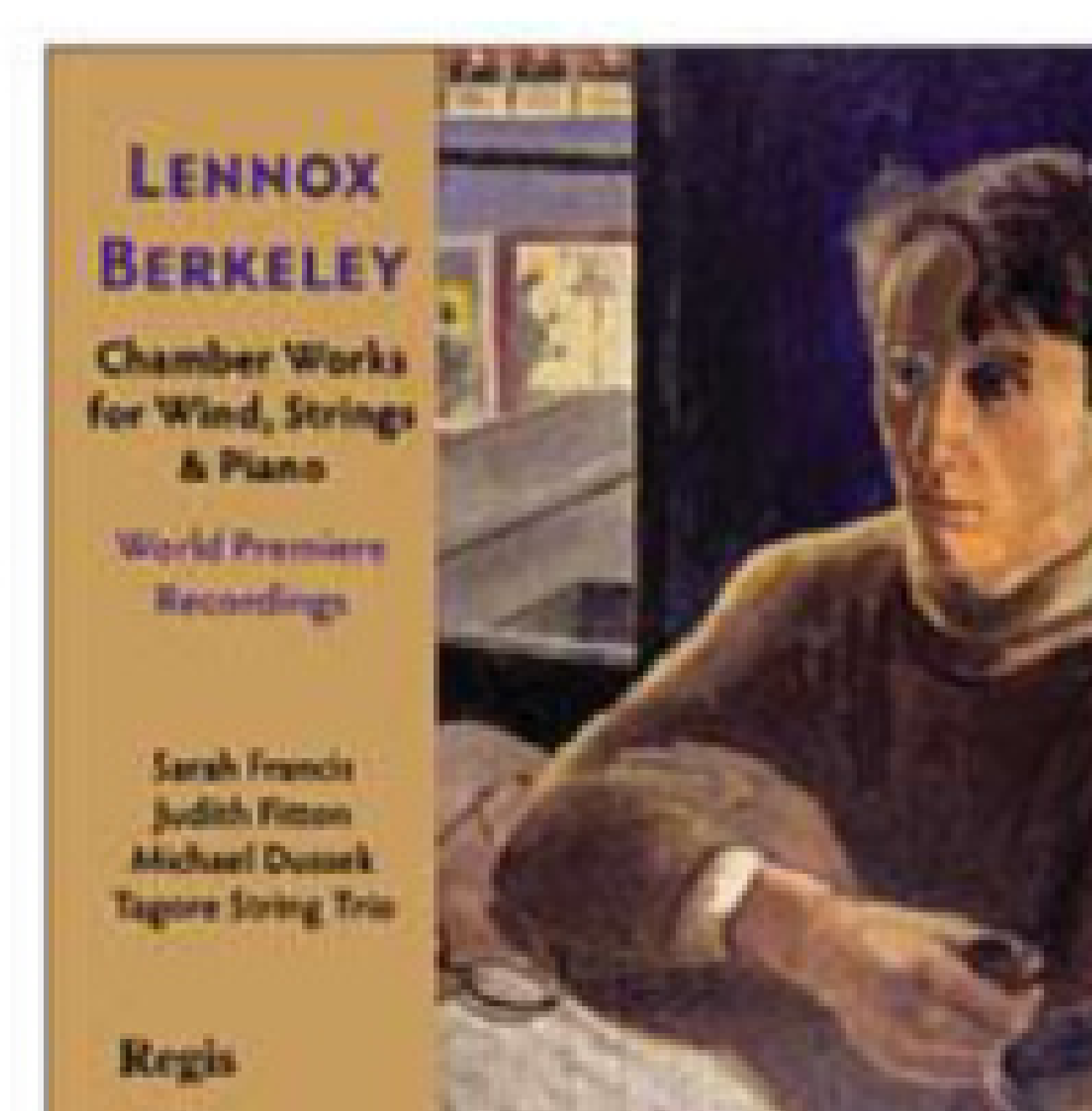


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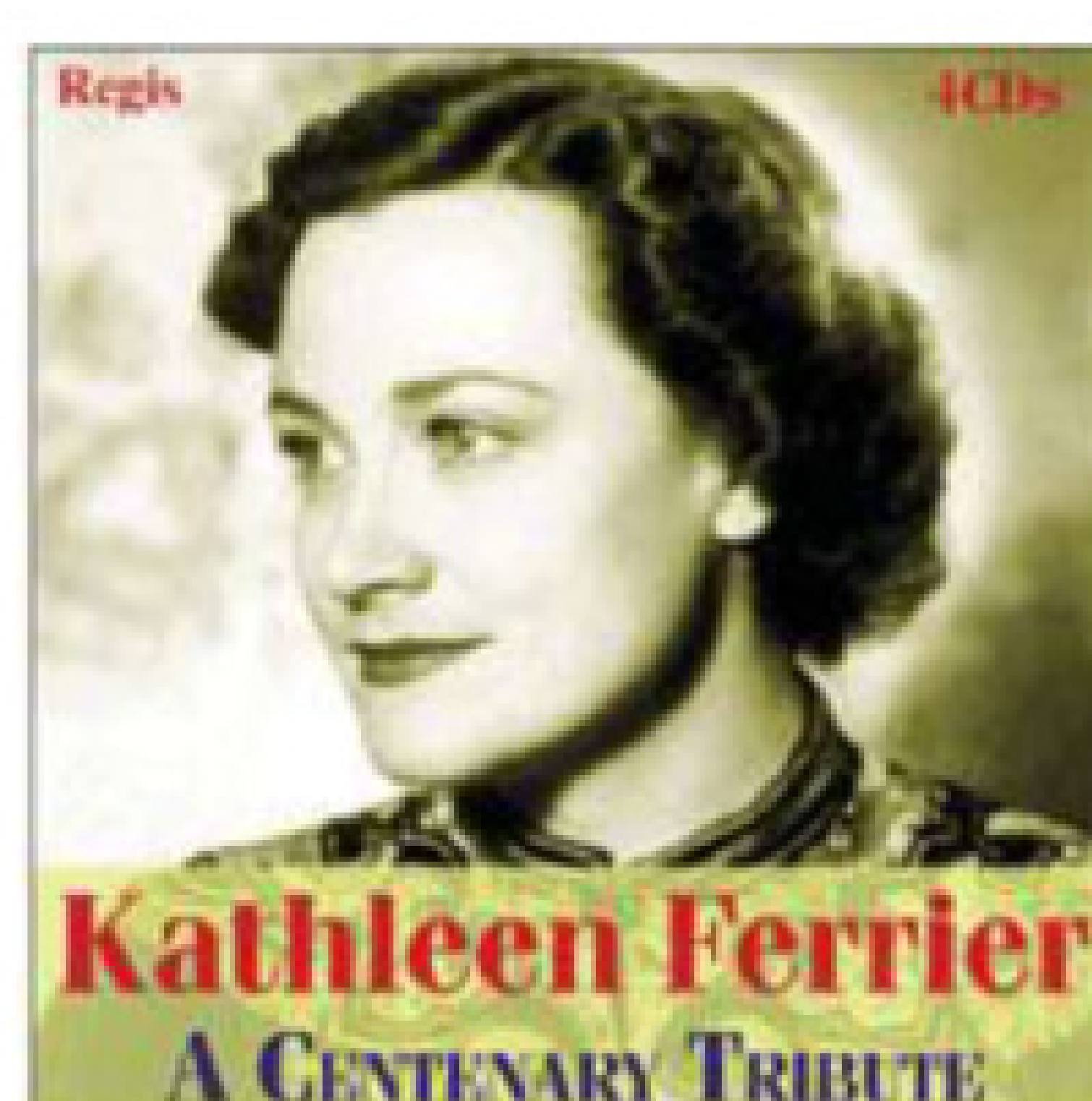
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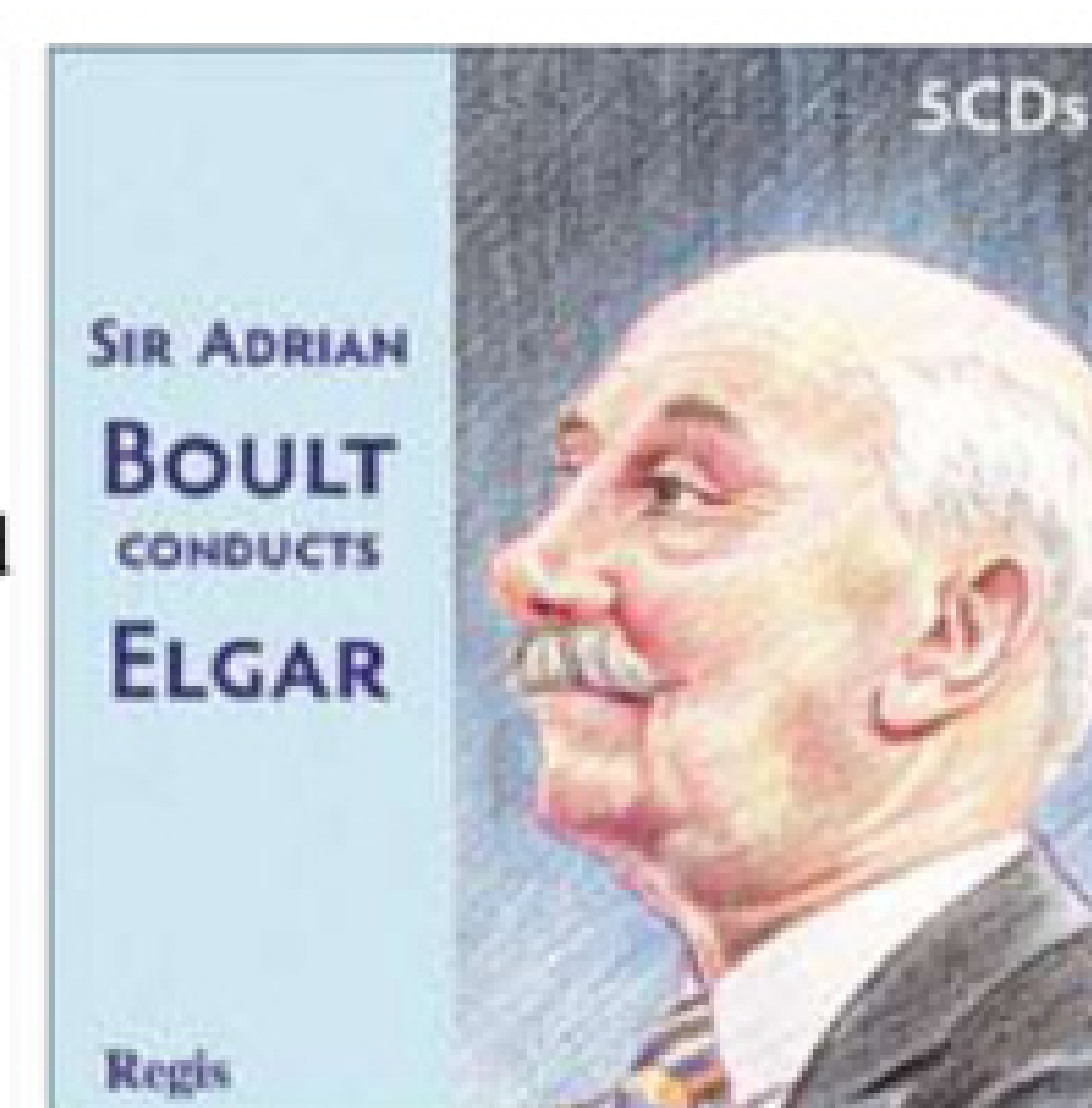
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sackbuts, dulcians and a heavier continuo group. (In the final, 60-voice *Agnus Dei*, 20 more singers are added.) The playing is slightly looser rhythmically, though never undisciplined: the sense of splendid occasion, of bombastic monumentality is, if possible, more pronounced on the new recording. For what it's worth, the edition used is different too, for the piece was transcribed about 30 years ago by the countertenor Dominique Visse (who sings on this recording) long before Davitt Moroney identified it as Striggio's.

What increases the appeal of this programme is the accompanying selection of fine motets by Striggio's compatriot Orazio Benevoli, himself a specialist of polychoral behemoths, and some settings of plainchants by Francesco Corteccia that mimic the improvised polyphony that was a common occurrence in festive Masses such as that represented here. The accompanying voices sound like a distant wittering, a novel effect such as I have seldom heard on disc. Can lightning strike twice in the same place? Who knows; but this disc certainly merits my personal accolade.

**Fabrice Fitch**

*Striggio – comparative version:*

*I Fagiolini, Hollingworth (5/11) (DECC) 478 2734DH2*

## Thoresen

'Himmelkvad'

Helligkvad (Sacred Songs), Op 19<sup>a</sup>.

Vocal Sextet, Op 42<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Berit Opheim Versto *sop* <sup>b</sup>Nordic Voices

2L Lindberg Lyd © ② ③ ④ ⑤ 2L075SABD

(73' • DDD/DXD • DTS-HD MA 5.0 & LPCM stereo • T/t)



Thoresen's Nordic Council Music Prize-winning Op 42

Hard on the heels of Simax's issue of his solo violin piece *Yr* (5/12) comes a whole disc devoted to unaccompanied vocal music by Lasse Thoresen (b1949). Two cycles are presented here, the six sacred songs *Helligkvad* – composed between 1988 and 1996 – for solo voice and the four motets based on Norwegian folk melodies composed for the six members of Nordic Voices in 2008-09 and which won the 2010 Nordic Council Music Prize.

Thoresen's aim with the Vocal Sextet is to foster 'a new culture of vocal music', the first fruit of the Concrecence Project in which the Nordic Voices were trained in overtone and body-singing techniques in order to articulate the works precisely. First in the cycle was 'Solbøn' ('Sun Prayer', 2008), which develops a five-note lullaby into a blazing hymn to light across 10 minutes. Opposites attract in the other movements: 'Likferdssælmin' is a 'Funeral Hymn' with some decidedly comic moments, 'Himmelske Fader' ('Heavenly Father') alternates



Sitting down for Striggio: members of Le Concert Spirituel

medieval- and oriental-sounding musics and 'Tvetrall' ('Dual Tune') is based on a two-part tune in two tempi with alternating time signatures.

Both cycles are beautifully rendered. Berit Opheim Versto is a hugely influential figure in Nordic vocal music and the six sacred songs of *Helligkvad* fit her unorthodox voice superbly. Nordic Voices have learnt their lessons well and turn in delightfully polished performances that lose none of the music's raw power. If I have a reservation it is in not finding the interleaving of the *Helligkvad* songs between the second, third and fourth movements of the Sextet overly convincing. 2L's recording is of demonstration quality. A fascinating disc containing much of real beauty.

**Guy Rickards**

## 'The Earth Resounds'

Brumel Missa Et ecce terraemotus - Gloria; Sanctus

Josquin Praeter rerum seriem. Huc me sydereo.

O virgo prudentissima Lassus Aurora lucis rutilat.

Timor et tremor. Magnificat secundi toni super

Praeter rerum seriem. Magnificat octavi toni super

Aurora lucis rutilat

The Sixteen / Harry Christophers, Eamonn Dougan

Coro © COR16097 (61' • DDD • T/t)



Lassus the anchor in Coro's Franco-Flemish programme

The strongest features of this latest recording from The Sixteen are its conception and the performances of Lassus's music, the composer who links nearly all the works on

this programme. His opulent, imaginative *Magnificat* setting *Praeter rerum seriem* is based on Josquin's motet of that name, and one of the surviving sources of Brumel's 12-voice Mass has annotations apparently in Lassus's own hand that indicate that he not only knew the work but performed it; his motet *Aurora lucis rutilat* and its associated *Magnificat* setting are scored for a nearly equal number of voices.

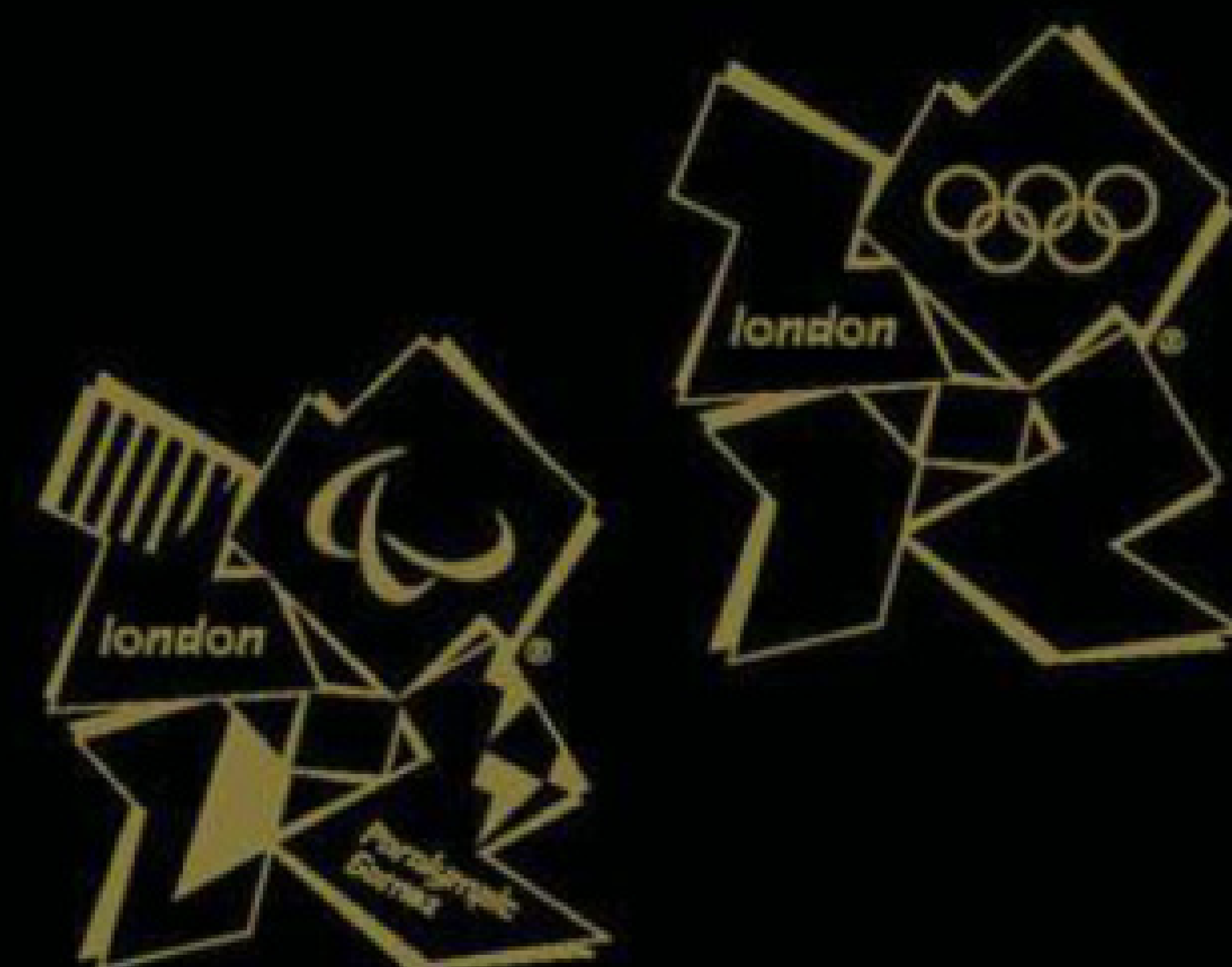
As I suggest at the start, the High Renaissance finds Harry Christophers (and guest conductor Eamonn Dougan, who here helped out a sometimes incapacitated Christophers) at his best: the rather full sound that has characterised his ensemble of late yields most in the later 16th century, for which performances by larger forces are more accepted now, and perhaps more widely practised then, than for the earlier. By contrast, the interpretations of Josquin and Brumel strike me as less sure-footed, the former because the choice of overly brisk tempi (especially in the deeply affecting *Huc me sydereo*, a meditation by Christ himself on the cross) risk skating over the music's carefully terraced expressions of pathos, and the latter because there isn't quite the clarity required to hear the 12 voices distinctly at full texture.

I'd wholeheartedly welcome more recordings of the earlier period from this ensemble, not least because their present form and notoriety would help increase the public's awareness of it; but as performers of Josquin, certainly, they've not quite yet hit their stride.

**Fabrice Fitch**



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## 'Une fête Baroque!'

Excerpts from **Handel** *Rinaldo*. Agrippina. Dixit Dominus. Orlando. Il delirio amoroso. La Resurrezione. Tamerlano. Giulio Cesare. Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno. Aci, Galatea e Polifemo. Theodora. Messiah  
**Lully** *Thésée* **Purcell** *King Arthur*. Come, ye Sons of Art  
**Rameau** *Les Indes galantes*. Hippolyte et Aricie. Dardanus. *Platée*. Castor et Pollux  
**Jaël Azzaretti**, **Laura Claycomb**, **Natalie Dessay**, **Aurélia Legay**, **Magali Léger**, **Françoise Masset**, **Patricia Petibon**, **Sandrine Piau**, **Sonya Yoncheva** *sops*  
**Karine Deshayes**, **Delphine Haidan**, **Ann Hallenberg**, **Anne Sofie von Otter**, **Renata Pokupić** *mezs*  
**Marijana Mijanović**, **Sara Mingardo** *contrs* **Pascal Bertin**, **Philippe Jaroussky** *countertens* **Topi Lehtipuu**, **Rolando Villazón** *tens* **Stéphane Degout**, **Lorenzo Regazzo** *bars* **Christopher Purves** *bass*  
**Le Concert d'Astrée** / **Emmanuelle Haïm**  
 Virgin Classics ⑤ ② (two discs for the price of one) 730799-2 (154' • DDD)  
 Recorded live at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Paris, December 19, 2011



Live taping of Le Concert d'Astrée's 10th-birthday gig

Emmanuelle Haïm, the director of Le Concert d'Astrée, has planned this anthology to celebrate the group's 10th anniversary, recorded at a concert last December at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris. This is illustrated in the booklet with a colour photograph of the whole ensemble, plus individual photos of the key artists. The programme is divided into two sections, the first including a good deal of Rameau but ending with the finale of Handel's *Rinaldo*, and the second exultantly closing with the 'Hallelujah' Chorus. The music is well chosen, all of the highest quality and appeal, and splendidly sung by these charismatic artists.

Disc 1 opens invitingly with the fourth entrée to scene 6 from Rameau's *Les Indes galantes* and Anne Sofie von Otter's tragic 'Air de Phèdre' follows touchingly. Then comes the orchestral 'Descente de Venus' from *Dardanus* and Jaël Azzaretti's delicate 'Air de la bergère' with solo flute and violin obbligato, which contrasts with the 'Air de la chasseresse' with vigorous trumpeting horns. Another highlight is the 'Air de la Folie' from *Platée*, spectacularly sung by Patricia Petibon. There is then an orchestral storm from *Hippolyte et Aricie*, followed by the lovely 'Air de Télémaque' (the sensitive Karine Deshayes) and an attractive instrumental Chaconne from *Dardanus*. Then comes Purcell, including the celebrated freezing aria from *King Arthur* (Christopher Purves described as a 'cold genius').

I could continue detailing the Handelian delights on the second disc, which includes excerpts from opera (notably *Giulio Cesare*), oratorio and cantata, but it is sufficient to say

that the performances continue the high standard of disc 1. The recording cannot be faulted but there are two linked complaints about its content. First, the excerpts are split up: for instance, there are three separate scenes from *Giulio Cesare*; and, worst of all, there are neither translations nor adequate synopses to tell those of us who cannot speak Italian what the singers are singing about! What a pity the ship is thus spoilt for a penn'orth of tar.

Ivan March

## 'Poèmes'

**Dutilleux** Deux Sonnets de Jean Cassou<sup>a</sup>.  
 Le temps l'horloge<sup>b</sup> **Messiaen** Poèmes pour Mi<sup>a</sup>  
**Ravel** Shéhérazade<sup>a</sup>  
**Renée Fleming** *sop*  
<sup>a</sup>Radio France Philharmonic Orchestra / Alan Gilbert;  
<sup>b</sup>Orchestre National de France / Seiji Ozawa  
 Decca ⑤ 478 3500DH (69' • DDD • T/t)  
<sup>b</sup>Recorded live at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Paris, May 7, 2009



In Paris, Fleming song-cycles in her favourite language

The outstanding item in this French collection is the first recording of Dutilleux's *Le temps l'horloge*. The short cycle of four songs with interlude was composed with Renée Fleming's voice specifically in mind and she revels in its rapturous lyricism. The selection of poems conjures strange, evocative images – a 'Face silent for ten thousand years', Time creeping among us 'like a thief in the night' – and Dutilleux has responded with music that is wonderfully suggestive. Against the backdrop of his enigmatic sound world, adorned by an accordion and the old-world tinkling of a harpsichord, Fleming's soprano soars and dips, hinting at great truths always just out of reach. The live recording was made at the premiere of the complete cycle, with Seiji Ozawa conducting the Orchestre National de France, and is superb in all respects.

The rest of the programme is well chosen but the performances are not on the same level. In Ravel's *Shéhérazade*, Fleming paints the cycle's descriptive pictures of the exotic East in detail but her penchant for slow speeds invites a degree of self-indulgence that weighs the music down.

Messiaen's vividly coloured *Poèmes pour Mi* is paced more skilfully and the voice's luminous quality has ecstasy within its reach, but Fleming sounds less comfortable here to the point where the tone loses its focus under stress. The other pair of Dutilleux songs, a perfect filler, get comparatively dull playing out of the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France under Alan Gilbert, who feature in all the studio recordings on the disc. The new Dutilleux cycle trumps the lot of them and is worth the price of the disc by itself. **Richard Fairman**

Mark Padmore  
sings Britten





**Stephen Bell, horn**  
**Britten Sinfonia, dir. Jaqueline Shave**

**Serenade for tenor, horn & strings Op.31**  
**Nocturne Op.60**

Celebrated tenor Mark Padmore joins with Britten Sinfonia in some of the most beautiful English music for voice and orchestra. The centrepiece is Benjamin Britten's magical evocation of twilight and nightfall, the *Serenade* (with Stephen Bell, horn). In Gerald Finzi's song-cycle *Dies Natalis*, the ecstatic mood reflects a child's wide-eyed wonder at the world. Britten's poignant *Nocturne* completes the programme.

**Also available**



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# Opera



## Richard Fairman reviews Massenet's *Werther* from Covent Garden:

'This is Massenet with an Italianate cut, but Pappano's sense of drama is second to none'

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 85**



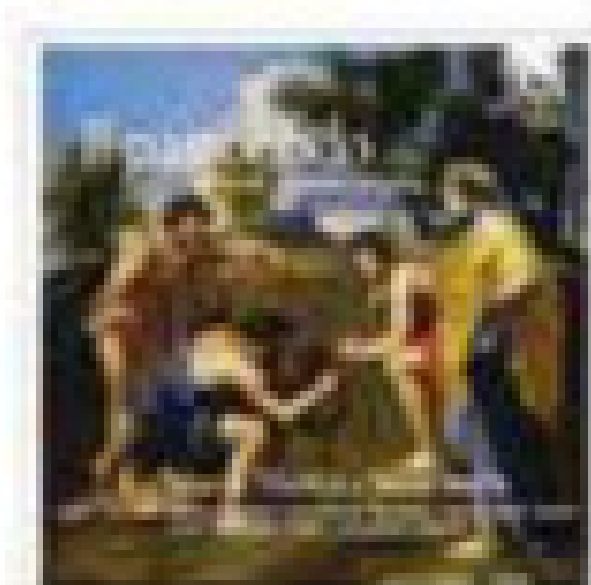
## David Patrick Stearns reviews Carsen's *Tannhäuser* from Spain:

'There are moments when Seiffert triumphs over the vocal difficulties with gratifying richness of tone' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 87**

## Handel

### *Il pastor fido* (1712 version)

Lucy Crowe *sop* ..... Amarilli  
 Anna Dennis *sop* ..... Mirtillo  
 Katherine Manley *sop* ..... Eurilla  
 Madeleine Shaw *mez* ..... Dorinda  
 Clint van der Linde *countertenor* ..... Silvio  
 Lisandro Abadie *bass-bar* ..... Tirenio  
 Helen-Jane Howells *sop* Simon Wall *ten* Jonathan  
 Sells *bass* La Nuova Musica / David Bates  
 Harmonia Mundi © ② HMC90 7585/6  
 (145' • DDD • S/T/t)



### Le Nuova Musica debut on HM with Handel's London opera

The musical and theatrical extravagances of Handel's first London opera, *Rinaldo*, had created a sensation early in 1711. Over a year later its successor, *Il pastor fido*, lying somewhere between a bucolic serenata and an *opera seria*, proved far less popular. Houses were reportedly sparse and the opera ran for just seven performances. One less than ecstatic eyewitness noted laconically: 'The Scene represented only ye Country of Arcadia. Ye Habits were old – ye Opera Short.'

True, the plot of *Il pastor fido*, centring on the amorous tangles of assorted nymphs and shepherds, is thin (is there a more passive and gullible Arcadian shepherd than the 'hero', Mirtillo?), the orchestration modest, the time-scale, by Handelian opera standards, brief. But the delicacy and airy grace of the music, some of it – including Mirtillo's drowsy musette aria 'Caro Amor' – lifted from Handel's Italian works, is often captivating. While the lilting rhythms of minuet and jig are rarely absent for long, Arcadia can be a melancholic, even (in the machinations of Eurilla, thwarted in her love for Mirtillo) treacherous place. Several numbers mine a deeper vein of feeling, among them Dorinda's anxious, halting sarabande 'Mi lasci, mi fuggi', Eurilla's sensuous cavatina 'Occhi belli' (sung to the sleeping Mirtillo), Amarilli's aria of mingled hurt and outrage at her imagined betrayal, and her tragic love duet with Mirtillo after she is condemned to death.

If Handel's radical 1734 revision and expansion of *Il pastor fido* offers a richer musical experience, this premiere recording of

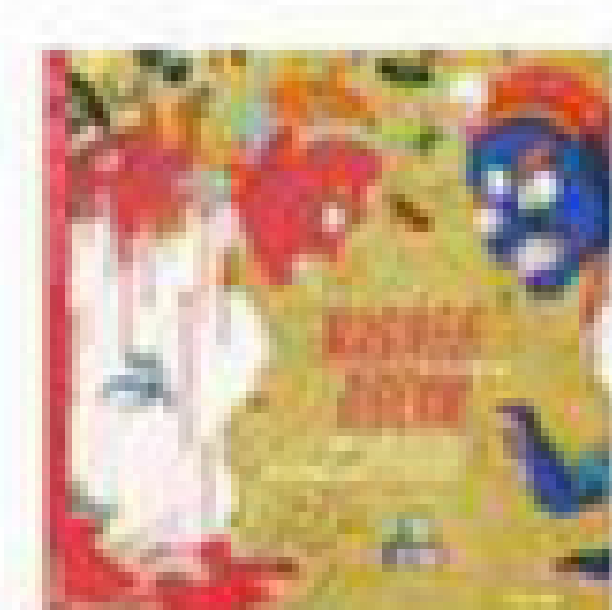
the 1712 original is certainly welcome, if not quite ideal. The vast, swimmy acoustic of London's Temple Church takes some getting used to. And, while David Bates lavishes evident care and affection on the score, his tempi in slower numbers occasionally verge on the indulgent. But in the main he directs his expert period band with spirit and imagination, while his singers all have pleasingly fresh, youthful voices.

Good as they are, countertenor Clint van der Linde as the macho huntsman Silvio and Katherine Manley as the malicious, ultimately penitent Eurilla could bring more verbal bite and tonal variety to their roles. Anna Dennis and the bell-toned Lucy Crowe sound more involved, shaping their coloratura flights elegantly and using ornamentation in the *da capos* to heighten the emotional expression. But the most theatrically gripping singing comes from mezzo Madeleine Shaw as Dorinda, above all in her haunting aria of masochistic devotion after she has been wounded by the idiotic Silvio's arrow. Whatever my provisos, this set offers two hours and more of innocent, just occasionally not so innocent, Arcadian pleasures to anyone who loves Handel's music. **Richard Wigmore**

## Harvey

### *Wagner Dream*

Claire Booth *sop* ..... Prakriti  
 Gordon Gietz *ten* ..... Ananda  
 Matthew Best *bar* ..... Vairochana  
 Dale Duesing *bar* ..... Buddha  
 Rebecca de Pont Davies *mez* ..... Mother  
 Richard Angas *bass* ..... Old Brahmin  
 Ictus Ensemble / Martyn Brabbins  
 Cypres © ② CYP5624 (94' • DDD)  
 Recorded live during the Holland Festival, Amsterdam, June 2007



### Harvey's Gesamtkunstwerk recorded live in Amsterdam

Avoiding the more prosaic title, Wagner's *Dream*, Jonathan Harvey and his librettist Jean-Claude Carrière identify their true theme: a 21st-century composer practised in the latest technologies imagines a possible connection between the day of Wagner's death in 1883 and

his projected Buddhist opera *Die Sieger* ('The Victors'). *Wagner Dream* is a work of bold contrasts: events on that last day in Venice are narrated in speech accompanied by music, and this documentary material interacts with an operatic realisation of the plot outline of *The Victors* which shuns naive varieties of musical exoticism and overt imitations of Wagner. Subtle allusions can nevertheless be detected: a solo section for Prakriti called 'Ballad' has similarities – especially rhythmic – with Senta's Ballad from *The Flying Dutchman*.

Following its world premiere in Luxembourg in April 2007, six performances of *Wagner Dream* were given in Amsterdam during June. This technically impeccable recording stems from those later stagings and the seasoned confidence of the artists involved – with principal singers Claire Booth, Gordon Gietz and Dale Duesing and conductor Martyn Brabbins – makes for a vivid and moving experience. The huge range of sound sources – speech, solo and choral singing, electronic and acoustic instrumental music – might initially disconcert listeners without a clear sense of what is happening on stage: this is very much a 'total' work of art, a late-modernist 'dream' of the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*. But Harvey avoids excessive complexity. His musical materials often repeat or vary simple motivic elements placed in a richly coloured harmonic spectrum that is only harshly dissonant when the dramatic context requires it.

Wagner's prose sketch for *Die Sieger* outlined the kind of tensions between sacred and secular realms of experience that found fulfilment in his last music drama, *Parsifal*. Composing *Wagner Dream* in his mid-to-late sixties – the age at which Wagner completed *Parsifal* – Harvey dramatises a very different kind of conflict between the agony of physical collapse and the desire for spiritual peace. His music is of our time in its forceful, often angular energy. But it also has the warmth and intensity to do its challenging subject justice. In the end, the melodrama of Wagner's last moments on earth and the high-flown vision of how *The Victors* can be given a living musical presence come into precarious but persuasive balance.

*Wagner Dream* is a remarkable achievement.

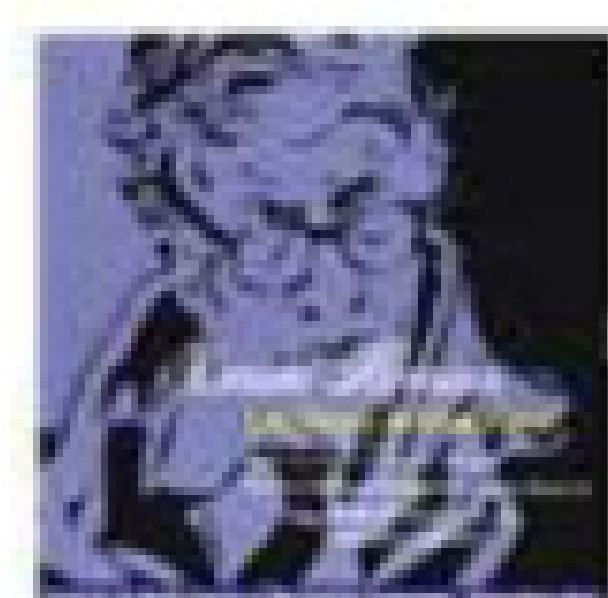
**Arnold Whittall**



## Herrmann

### Wuthering Heights

Laura Aikin *sop* ..... Catherine Earnshaw  
 Boaz Daniel *bar* ..... Heathcliff  
 Vincent Le Texier *bar* ..... Hindley Earnshaw  
 Hanna Schaer *mez* ..... Nelly Dean  
 Yves Saelens *ten* ..... Edgar Linton  
 Marianne Crebassa *mez* ..... Isabella Linton  
 Jerome Vannier *bass* ..... Joseph  
 Nicolas Cavallier *bar* ..... Mr Lockwood  
 Gaspard Ferret *spkr* ..... Hareton Earnshaw  
 Groupe Vocal Opéra Junior; Montpellier Languedoc-  
 Roussillon National Orchestra / Alain Altinoglu  
 Accord ③ 476 4653 (171' • DDD • T/t)  
 Recorded live at the Opéra Berlioz Le Corum,  
 Montpellier, July 2010



### A follow-up recording for Herrmann's 1950 Brontë opera

The full plot of Emily Brontë's novel makes those of Russian 19th-century epics read like Noddy. Like Carlisle Floyd, Bernard J Taylor and Kate Bush, and William Wyler's 1939 film with Laurence Olivier, Bernard Herrmann and librettist Lucille Fletcher stayed (the odd textual borrowing aside) with the first part of the story – the tortured love affair of Cathy and Heathcliff.

Reviews of a previous recording, sponsored and conducted by the composer in 1966 (Pye, latterly on Unicorn-Kanchana, 8/93 – nla), and indeed some of this new one, chant a litany of influences – the Puccini of *La fanciulla del West*, Delius (because of his Yorkshire background and *North Country Sketches*?), Warlock's *The Curlew* (a shared outdoor setting?), Holst, Korngold, Menotti... But this trawl for sound-alike scores denies Herrmann the individual timbre – jazz-influenced, American, mid-20th-century, tonal but not conservative – that cries out from his film work – *Citizen Kane*, *Vertigo*, *Psycho*, *Taxi Driver*. He scores fluently – you could not imagine Herrmann, like Vaughan Williams, wondering what to do with the clarinets in a loud *tutti* or, like Strauss, worrying that improvements in modern recording would 'find out' the lack of originality in his inner orchestral parts. Indeed, if this composer had not been so picky about performances (especially if they involved cuts), he might have had a premiere under Stokowski and a richly cast recording under Julius Rudel. But 'live' outings for the opera to date have been restricted to high days and holidays – like the present one given two years ago on Bastille Day in Montpellier with a largely Franco-Belgian cast.

Edward Greenfield, in his original review of the composer's recording (3/67), found 'nothing whatever frightening about the score'. I must disagree – Herrmann is good at the paradoxical claustrophobia of the open-air heath settings, a mood found immediately



Doomed love: Rolando Villazón's Werther reveals all to Sophie Koch's Charlotte

in the Prelude and repeated (again claustrophobically) in the Epilogue. Where the result doesn't quite fire may have to do with Herrmann's musical treatment of his libretto (itself super-faithful to the novel) with a literalness and reverence that one suspects his film music never offered the directors he scored for. This was the man who constructively built on Hitchcock's 'something modern and jazzy' suggestion for *Psycho* to return with the radical all-strings score that sealed the scary image of that movie. In *Wuthering Heights* he follows the action rather than creates it. The work's length – not overmuch at a tad under three hours – is emphasised by the large amount of slow, moody music and lower voices, and lack of real contrasts (the chorus of carollers at the end of Act 1 scene 2 is quite a significant relief).

I have not been able to hear the original recording recently enough to make valid comparisons. But suffice it to say that this performance is really excellent and natural. Altinoglu and his soloists (especially Laura Aikin's Cathy, a big role, and Yves Saelens's Edgar Linton) have gotten themselves wholly involved with both drama and idiom. Sound and balance (French radio) are good; only the occasional Francophone vowels in *parlando* passages distracts from the cast's well-studied English. **Mike Ashman**

## Massenet

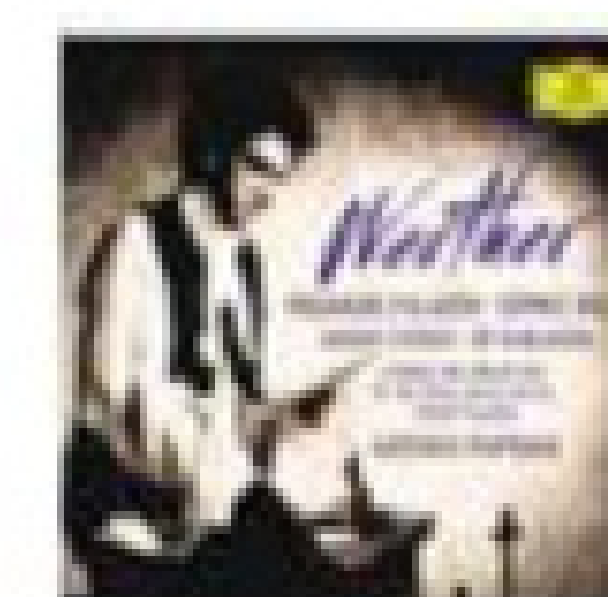
### Werther

Rolando Villazón *ten* ..... Werther  
 Sophie Koch *sop* ..... Charlotte  
 Audun Iversen *bar* ..... Albert  
 Eri Nakamura *sop* ..... Sophie

Alain Vernhes *bass* ..... Magistrate  
 Stuart Patterson *ten* ..... Schmidt  
 Darren Jeffery *bass-bar* ..... Johann  
 Zhengzhong Zhou *bar* ..... Brühlmann  
 Anna Devin *sop* ..... Käthchen  
 Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden /  
 Antonio Pappano

DG ② 477 9340GH2 (132' • DDD • S/T/t)

Recorded live, May 2011



### Live recording of Covent Garden's 2011 Werther

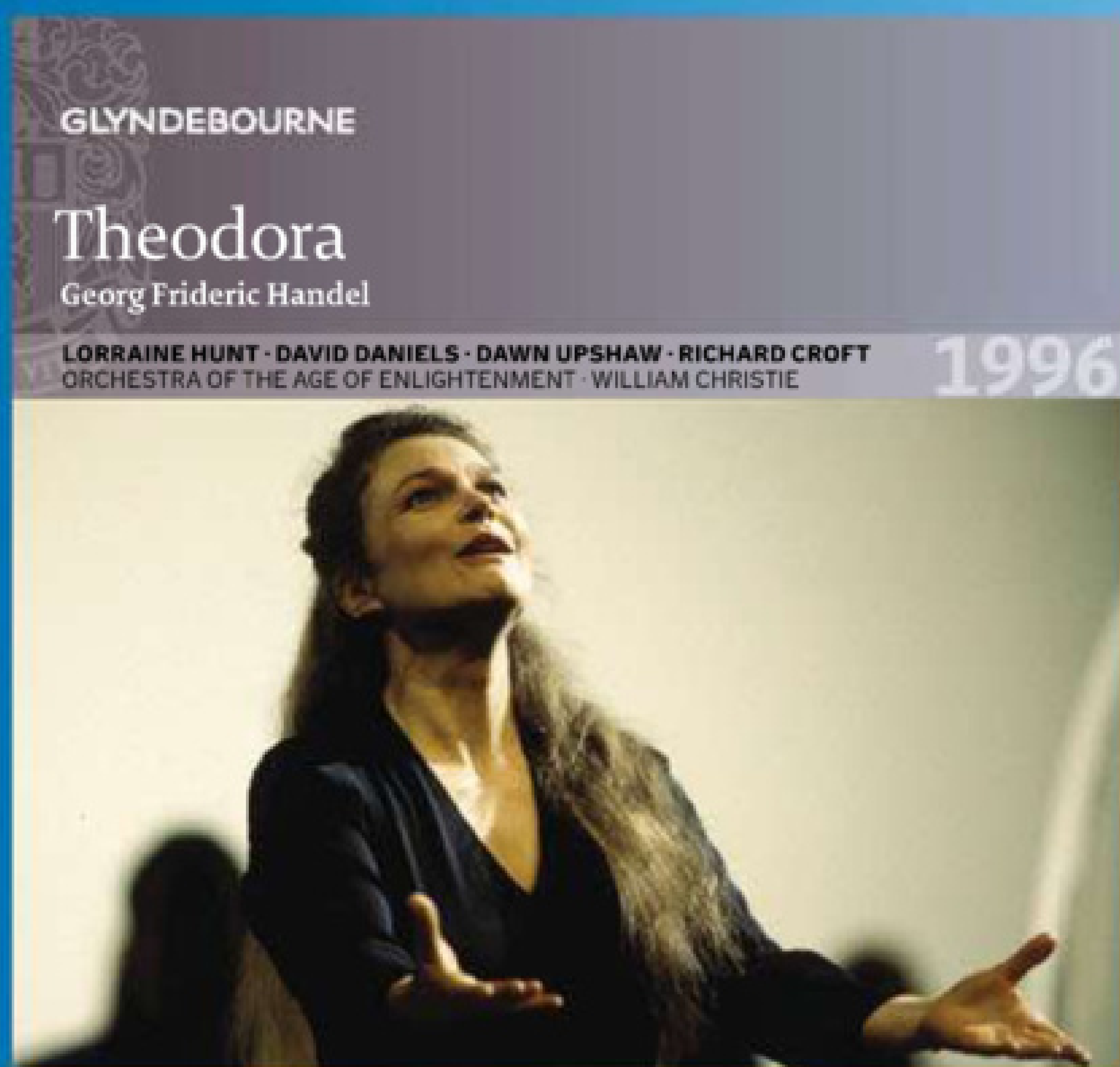
It is a shame that this live recording of *Werther* comes to us as audio only. Although the Royal Opera's production had little to commend it, there would have been a real gain from seeing Rolando Villazón onstage, throwing every fibre of his being into an intense portrayal of Werther as a loner struggling against his fate, as if he were being dragged down in an emotional whirlpool.

The performances marked Villazón's return to opera in London after a long absence. This recording is unable to disguise that his voice has lost power and he has nothing at all left in reserve for the big moments, but every ounce of what remains is employed fearlessly to fire up the inferno in Werther's tortured soul. His passion may have been expected but not perhaps the subtlety: it is impressive to hear so much soft singing live in the opera house and how conscientiously he shapes long phrases (try the broad arch at 'Les étoiles et le soleil', with only one breath, in the love duet). Tingling with nervous intensity, Villazón's Werther is alive at every moment in the mind's eye. With



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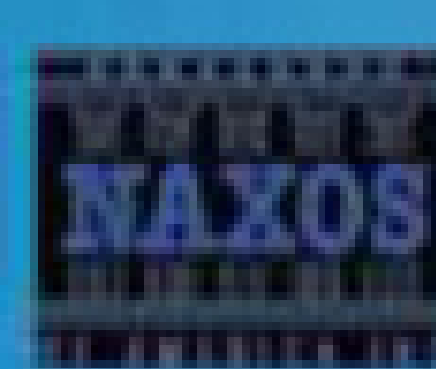
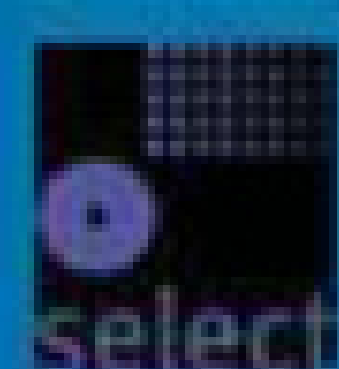
This production confirms Lorraine Hunt as  
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'...Musically and dramatically this production  
is flawless' (*The Guardian*)



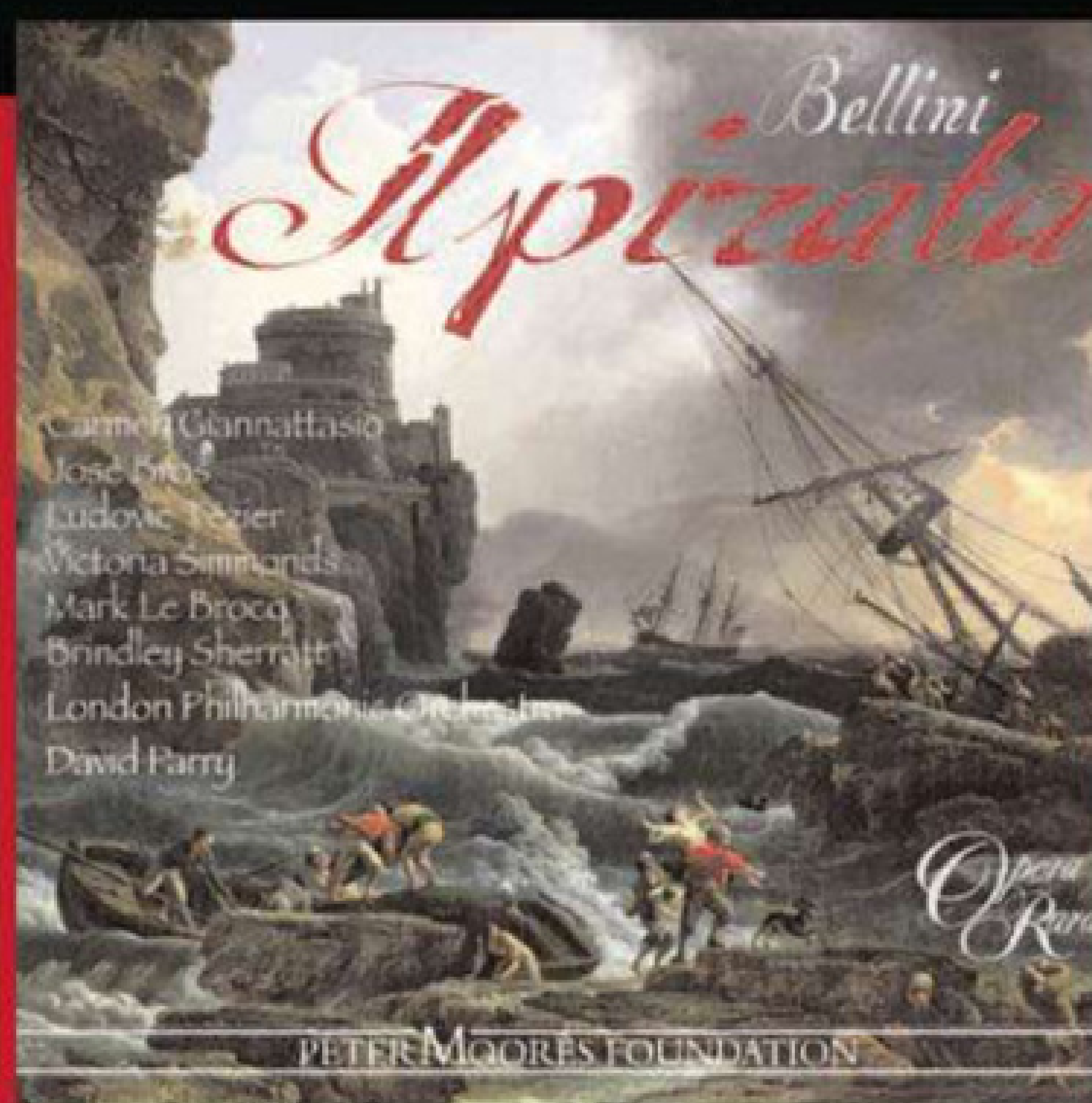
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# Bellini *Il pirata*



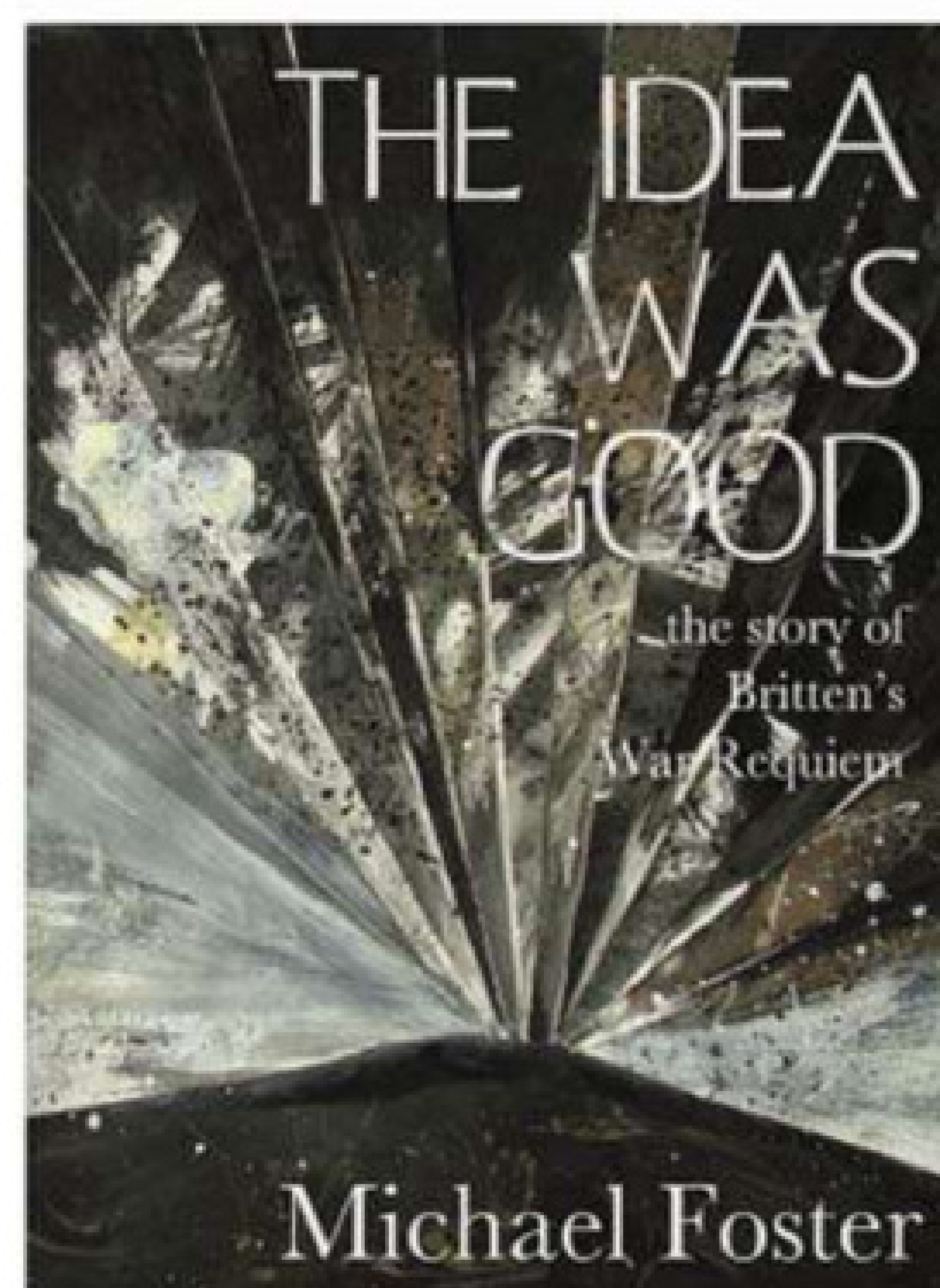
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~ if Britten's  
music was the  
sheath ...  
the raw steel  
of its bloodied  
sword was  
Wilfred Owen  
”

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£12.75 + p&p. Published 30th April 2012. Published by and profits to Coventry Cathedral 02476 521 200; [www.warrequiem.co.uk](http://www.warrequiem.co.uk)  
or write: War Requiem, Coventry Cathedral, Hill Top CV1 5AB.



Wagner mezzo roles under her belt, Sophie Koch's Charlotte rises to the big moments generously enough – and it is a pleasure to hear a native French speaker in the role – but her tone is sometimes hard, the character unengaging. Eri Nakamura makes a bright but not shrill Sophie and the young Norwegian baritone Audun Iversen as Albert is a singer to watch. Aside from Villazón, the strongest personality in the cast is Antonio Pappano, who gets detailed playing from the orchestra. This is Massenet with an Italianate cut but his sense of drama is second to none, rising to white heat at the climax of that fateful Christmas Eve meeting. The recording has a dry theatre ambience, without a lot of space around it, and the voices are not always as close as one would like.

A first choice for *Werther* on CD is tricky. What we really want is the authority of Thill and Vallin, mixed with a dash of Carreras's romanticism, a soupçon of Kraus's elegance, and suffused with the insights that Callas and Crespín brought to Charlotte's arias. But we don't have that; and in the meantime this live recording adds a distinctive voice of its own.

Richard Fairman

## Monteverdi

### L'incoronazione di Poppea

**Birgitte Christensen** *sop* ..... **Poppea**  
**Jacek Laszczkowski** *counterten* ..... **Nero**  
**Patricia Bardon** *mez* ..... **Ottavia**  
**Tim Mead** *counterten* ..... **Ottone**  
**Giovanni Battista Parodi** *bar* ..... **Seneca**  
**Marita Sølberg** *sop* ..... **Virtue, Drusilla**  
**Amelie Aldenheim** *sop* ..... **Love**  
**Ina Kringlebotn** *sop* ..... **Fortune**  
**Tone Kruse** *contr* ..... **Nutrice**  
**Emiliano Gonzalez-Toro** *ten* ..... **Arnalta**  
**Magnus Staveland** *ten* ..... **Lucano**  
**David Fielder** *ten* ..... **Valetto**

Orchestra of the Norwegian National Opera /

Alessandro De Marchi

Stage director Ole Anders Tandberg

Video directors Anja Stabell and Stein-Roger Bull

EuroArts © DVD 205 8928; © Blu-ray 205 8924 (180' •

NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS 5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live, 2010



**Tandberg's bloodbath**  
**Incoronazione in Oslo**

Monteverdi's last opera is renowned for two particular features: the principal characters are drawn from history rather than legend, and the story celebrates – there's no other word – the triumph of vice over virtue. Egged on by Poppea, Nero orders Seneca to kill himself; Ottavia is banished, as is Ottone, Poppea's former lover; Poppea succeeds Ottavia as Nero's empress. Amorous and petulant, amorous and scheming respectively, Nero and Poppea are deeply unattractive. Their

characterisation in music is drawn quite miraculously, and Monteverdi is equally unerring in his portrayal of Ottone's jealousy and Ottavia's bitterness. Nobody commands the audience's sympathy except, possibly, Seneca: even the lovelorn Drusilla rejoices at the prospect of her rival Poppea's murder.

How best to depict these grotesques for a 21st-century audience? Ole Anders Tandberg's solution is to put them in modern dress and to have them indulge in what the booklet-note calls 'frequent lashings of blood and sex'. The colours are black and white, with slashes of red lipstick: as for the blood, for lashings read buckets. Jacek Laszczkowski plays Nero brilliantly as a complete psychopath but Tandberg goes way over the top. The most revolting scene is the duet where Nero and Lucano celebrate – that word again! – the death of Seneca. The old man's corpse is on the stage, and not only do they wallow in his blood but Lucan does unspeakable things to the body (unfeasible and, given that Seneca was his uncle, unlikely).

Tandberg introduces more deaths at the end. After telling Ottone that he can live, Nero shoots him in the back. Ottavia stabs her nurse, then herself. During the ravishing final duet, the four consuls and tribunes (who have been deprived of their ensemble) are inexplicably murdered by Nero and Poppea, as is Arnalta. The stage is littered with as many bodies as in a Jacobean tragedy.

You are hardly going to buy this for the singing but, for what it's worth, the best is from Tim Mead and Patricia Bardon. Monteverdi's scoring has been enhanced, not too offensively. The filming – often from above – is excellent. But you have been warned.

Richard Lawrence

## Vivaldi

### Orlando furioso

**Marie-Nicole Lemieux** *contr* ..... **Orlando**  
**Verónica Cangemi** *sop* ..... **Angelica**  
**Jennifer Larmore** *mez* ..... **Alcina**  
**Kristina Hammarström** *mez* ..... **Bradamante**  
**Romina Basso** *mez* ..... **Medoro**  
**Philippe Jaroussky** *counterten* ..... **Ruggiero**  
**Christian Senn** *bar* ..... **Astolfo**

Chorus of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Paris;

Ensemble Matheus / Jean-Christophe Spinosi

Stage director Pierre Audi

Video director Olivier Simonnet

Naïve © DVD DR2148 (190' • NTSC • 16:9 • 0 • s)

Recorded live at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Paris, March 2011



**Six years after the CD recording,**  
**Spinosi's filmed Orlando in Paris**

Not so much furious as mad: and they don't come much madder than Orlando in this production by Pierre Audi. Jean-Christophe

Spinosi and his Ensemble Matheus made a CD recording of *Orlando furioso* in 2004 which was enthusiastically reviewed by David Vickers (Naïve, 4/05). Now comes this staged version with four of the same singers. It's a *tour de force*: I didn't enjoy it much, but then I don't 'enjoy' *King Lear* either.

Vivaldi composed the opera for Venice in 1727. The libretto, based on the famous epic poem by Ariosto, provides two stories in one. The paladin Orlando is in pursuit of Angelica. When he discovers that she has married Medoro, Orlando becomes unhinged; recovering, he blesses their union. In the meantime, Ruggiero has been seduced by the sorceress Alcina, to the fury of his lover Bradamante; but by the end, the lovers are reconciled, Alcina loses her magic powers and everyone – except for her – is happy.

All this will be more or less familiar to those who know Handel's *Orlando* (1733) and *Alcina* (1735). The plot has its weaknesses, but order is restored in true Enlightenment fashion. However, Audi imposes a very modern sensibility by ending with Orlando lurching about the stage in despair, quite unable to accept losing Angelica to Medoro. This is to over-egg an already rich pudding.

The pudding in question is Orlando's mad scene in Act 3. There is some accompanied recitative in the opera, of the string halo type, but the action is generally advanced through *recitativo secco*. Vivaldi misses a trick, you might think, by eschewing the orchestra for most of this scene; but Marie-Nicole Lemieux seizes the opportunity provided and, free from the need to follow a conductor, gives a knockout performance (despite the handicap of facial hair more suitable for Stravinsky's Baba the Turk).

The set is simple; the costumes are 18th-century. Bentwood chairs and a table do duty for seashore and cavern. Ruggiero's protestation of love, Alcina's search for happiness, Angelica's inconsistent behaviour towards Medoro – all are movingly expressed in arias of a painful immediacy. Not a bundle of laughs, but you shouldn't miss this: it's a real eye-opener. Richard Lawrence

## Wagner

### Tannhäuser

**Peter Seiffert** *ten* ..... **Tannhäuser**  
**Petra Maria Schnitzer** *sop* ..... **Elisabeth**  
**Markus Eiche** *bar* ..... **Wolfram**  
**Béatrice Uria-Monzon** *mez* ..... **Venus**  
**Günther Groissböck** *bass* ..... **Hermann**  
**Vicente Ombuena** *ten* ..... **Walther**  
**Lauri Vasar** *bar* ..... **Biterolf**  
**Francisco Vas** *ten* ..... **Heinrich**  
**Johann Tilli** *bass* ..... **Reinmar**  
**Eliana Bayón** *sop* ..... **Shepherd**  
 Chorus and Symphony Orchestra of the Gran Teatre del Liceu, Barcelona / Sebastian Weigle



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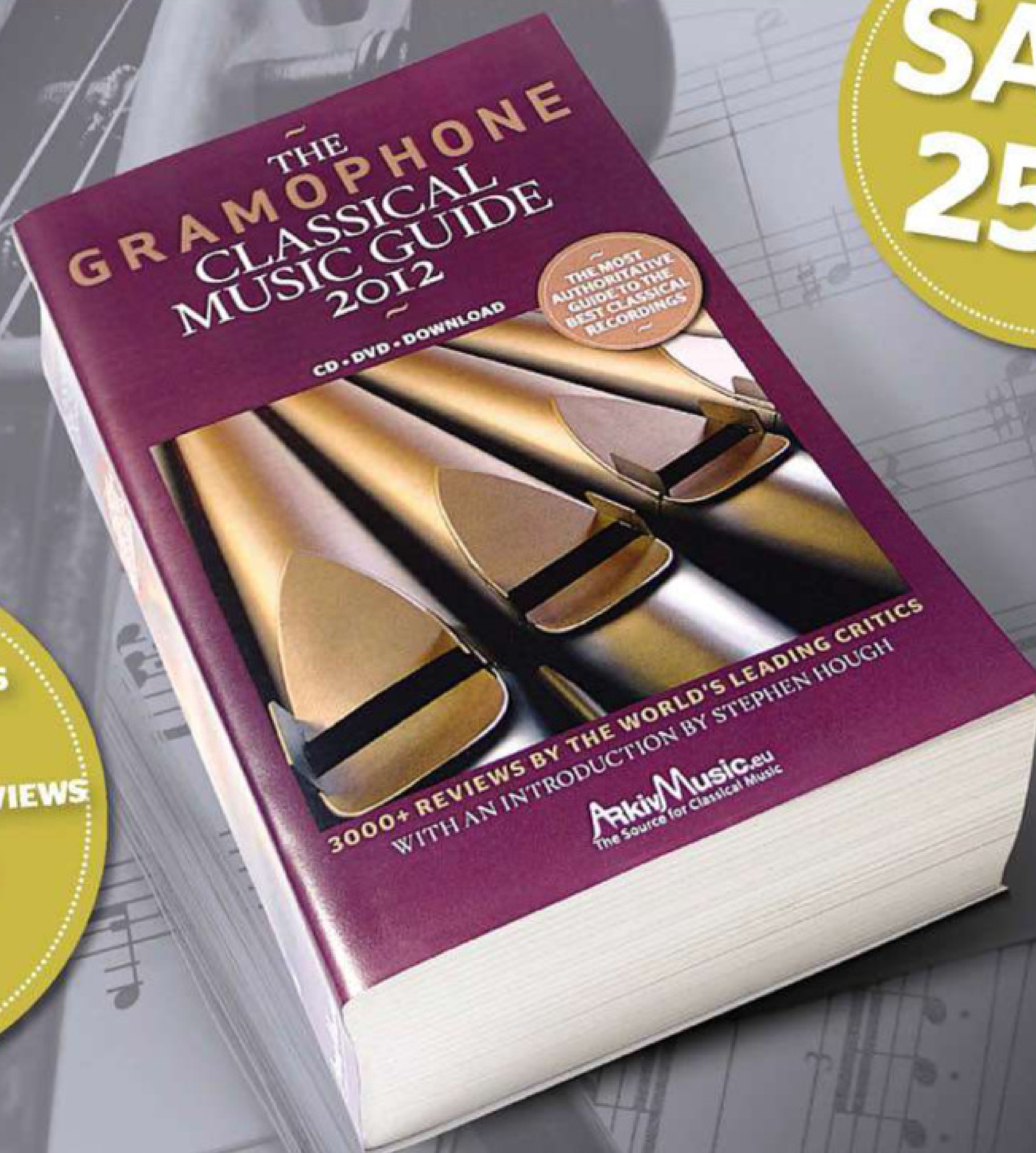
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Gramophone Classical Music Guide 2012



Stage director **Robert Carsen**

Video director **Xavi Buvé**

C Major Entertainment © ② DVD 709308;

© 709404 (2h 21' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i •

DTS-HD MA 7.1, DTS 5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live, April 2008



### Carsen's gallery-concept *Tannhäuser* from Barcelona

Though often a director of dazzling invention, Robert Carsen takes such a contrary approach to *Tannhäuser* in this production that, by Act 2, the opera itself begins to seem conceptually ridiculous. The central dilemma – a medieval Minnesänger's struggle between the sacred and the profane as embodied by conflicting loyalties to the Dionysian Venus and Apollonian Elisabeth – is obliquely translated into the modern art world in which gallery retrospectives are big business (raising the dramatic stakes, sort of), but has the unfortunate side effect of having men in grey suits incongruously moralising about the benefits of piety.

Yes, it's *Sunday in the Park with Tannhäuser*. Venus is his nude model. Dozens of paintings litter their studio. The Venusberg ballet is a lot of semi-naked male dancers plastered with paint and orgiastically rolling around on canvases, suggesting that creating art is a purely sexual act. Upon departing from Venusberg, Tannhäuser joins fellow Minnesängers on a dark stage with a half-open rear door radiating white light – one of many spare, expansive, meticulously arranged stage pictures that convince you the production might be saying something significant.

Once the opera's setting opens up into the airier, lighter world of Elisabeth, characters arrive via the opera house's stalls. In fact, the modern street clothes worn by Elisabeth while singing 'Dich, teure Halle, grüss' ich wieder' are so similar to those of Glenn Close in the film *Meeting Venus* that one has to assume it's an intended homage. Carsen's hallmark is twist endings (in his *Don Giovanni*, the title-character returns from hell unscathed at the end of the epilogue); in this production, Venus and Elisabeth are suddenly no longer in conflict with each other. They're equal artistic muses, both modelling in identical white sheets.

That gives way to a *coup de théâtre* (I won't reveal it – I've probably spoilt enough surprises already) that suggests Tannhäuser's angst is merely the drama of his artistic process, which is perhaps more for a psychiatrist's couch than the opera stage. Again, the opera seems reduced to much ado about little, though, in all fairness to Carsen, this is one Wagner opera with extremely questionable pacing (the Act 1 Tannhäuser/Venus break-up goes on for ever) and thus can prompt desperate directorial decisions to sustain a dramatic arc. The Götz Friedrich video, for one, has Venus returning in Act 3 curiously resembling the grim reaper.



Struggling for his art: Peter Seiffert as Tannhäuser

Too bad Peter Sellars isn't reviving his *Tannhäuser*, in which the title-character is aptly played as a corrupt televangelist and which is the one successful updating of this opera.

Musically, the primary drawing card is Peter Seiffert, not the most camera-friendly Tannhäuser but among the most vocally compelling. When this video was shot in 2008, his voice was beginning to show its mileage (he was 54), though there are so many moments where he not only triumphs over the vocal difficulties but does so with gratifying richness of tone and meaningful text projection. The rest of the cast is good enough but not competitive with what else is out there. Some might not care because the two women so look their parts, Béatrice Uria-Monzon being a buff, suntanned Venus and Petra Maria Schnitzer projecting appropriate poise as Elisabeth. Once Markus Eiche gets past some untidy phrasing in the recitative for his famous 'O du, mein holder Abendstern', he emerges as a significant Wolfram. The biggest disappointment is orchestral, though not necessarily due to conductor Sebastian Weigle, since the stage *vs* pit balances don't favour instrumentalists. Again turning to the Friedrich video, Colin Davis is a reminder how valuable a strong conducting personality can be in this opera. **David Patrick Stearns**

*Selected comparison:*

*Bayreuth Fest Op, C Davis (5/09) (DG) 073 4446GH2*

## 'Arrivederci'

**Cannio** 'O surdato 'nnammurato **Cardillo**

Core 'ngrato **Dalla** Caruso **D'Annibale** 'O paese d' 'o sole **D'Anzi** Voglio vivere così **De Curtis** Torna a Surriento. Non ti scordar di me **Di Lazzaro**

Chitarra romana **Giordano** Fedora – Amor ti vieta

**Leoncavallo** Mattinata **Rascel** Arrivederci, Roma

**Rossini** Soirées musicales – La danza

**Verdi** Rigoletto – La donna è mobile

**Vittorio Grigolo** ten **Chorus and Orchestra of the**

**Teatro Regio, Parma / Pier Giorgio Morandi**

Sony Classical © 88691 93175-2 (40' • DDD • T/t)



### Grigolo with an arias album recorded in Parma and London

For those who have been on Mars, the Italian tenor Vittorio Grigolo once sang in both the Sistine Chapel choir and (briefly) Simon Cowell's *Il Divo*, recorded first at the age of 13 (the Shepherd Boy in a live RCA *Tosca* to Luciano Pavarotti's Cavaradossi) and more recently a duet with Nicole Scherzinger, and sang Alfredo live on Zurich Hauptbahnhof (the DVD was a Christmas best-seller at the station booking office). Oh, and he pretty much stole the curtain calls from Anna Netrebko in his short-notice London debut as des Grieux.

Grigolo's 'second album' (he makes a lot of this in his own notes, sounding like a worried rock band at a self-conscious career watershed) is essentially a classical pop record – a combination of Neapolitan songs, the shortest of popular arias and Rossini's 'La danza'. It is carefully produced and delivered, very short measure (40 minutes) and was, bizarrely, recorded in both Parma and London's Wathen Hall. Backing in Italy, vocal overdubs in Britain? Anything is possible.

But snobbery about 'popera' stars now should be put on hold. Grigolo's bright, forward projection and not huge voice suits this Three Tenors repertoire well and he handles it with more respect (and, dare one say, taste) and intelligent use of the words than some of his predecessors therein. The Italian pops, especially 'Arrivederci, Roma', have a refreshing simplicity. High notes are there but are far from being just the pegs it all hangs on. The opener, Lucio Dalla's 1986 song 'Caruso', has an intriguing lyric about the singer's marriage to Dorothy Benjamin. Only 'La danza' doesn't quite come off because Grigolo seems to be chasing Morandi's tempi – a London/Parma axis problem? And the orchestrations, all latter-day apart from the arias and the Rossini, often walk near the schmaltz border. But, overall, whatever your take on his CV, this sounds like a serious artist and he's been well recorded and produced.

**Mike Ashman**



# Books



**Jeremy Nicholas admires an exhaustive survey of singing styles:**

*'It is an impressive achievement to cover everything from Sumerian praise hymns to Radiohead in a little over 300 pages'*



**Colin Anderson on a study of rural influences on British music:**

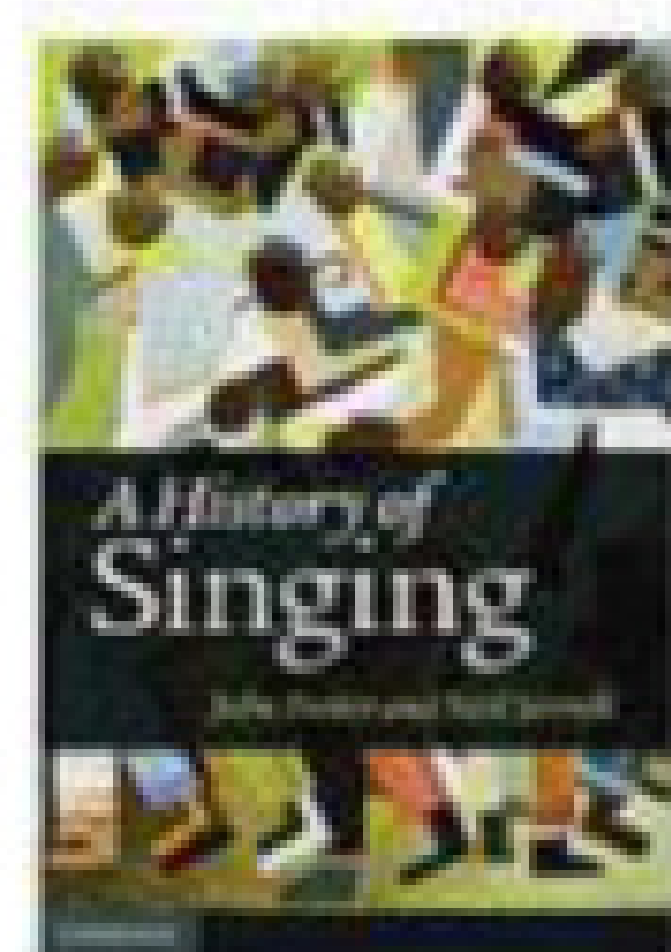
*'Em Marshall writes with enthusiasm about how terrain and weather have played their part in fashioning music we know and love'*

## A History of Singing

By John Potter and Neil Sorrell

Cambridge University Press, HB, 380pp, £75

ISBN 978-0-521-81705-9



At first sight this book has the daunting appearance of a PhD thesis. Who is it aimed at: the scholar, the specialist or the general reader? Whatever, it would have benefited from some illustrations, both musical and pictorial. In point of fact, however, it quickly becomes clear that the joint authors share an engaging prose style that is some remove from the dry tones of academe. John Potter, for many years a member of the Hilliard Ensemble, edited *The Cambridge Companion to Singing* (8/00), and is a former lecturer at the University of York, where Neil Sorrell is currently a senior lecturer.

Their sources are enticingly eclectic, embracing everything from a study of the Suyá Indians and the throat singers of Tuva to the phonographic evidence of vocal ornamentation in Verdi and *The Frank Sinatra Reader*. This all-encompassing range is both the book's strength and weakness. The exploration of the history of unfamiliar vocal traditions forms, perhaps, the most valuable sections of the book. It is as rare to find an even-handed account of all singing cultures in a single volume as it is to read a history of anything other than the Western tradition. The authors quote to good effect AH Fox Strangways writing about Indian music in 1914: 'The Indian does not make or read histories, and does not appreciate the value of chronological record. It is the custom to smile at this; but it would be well to understand his point of view first. A whole people is not generally mistaken about its real needs.'

Occidental vocal music with which most readers of this book will be more or less well acquainted (and they're likely to be the majority of its purchasers) has a readily accessible history. It is available to hear, composers and artists alike, at the touch of a button. We can relate to the techniques,

sounds and scores described. We can hear Purcell or Callas or Louis Armstrong in our heads. Potter covers the ground exceedingly well – and is not afraid of being contentious. Here he is on opera singers of today: 'Choice, the famous engine of capitalism, means that we can choose to listen to a large number of excellent singers all performing broadly the same thing.' And later: 'It is already the case that the importance of singing in some of the most elaborate operatic productions is secondary to that of the production itself.'

It is a very different matter when it comes to the vocal traditions of other cultures. Neil Sorrell, a specialist in Asian and non-Western music, has the difficult task of conveying a wealth of foreign terms without the reader having the benefit of the same mental aural reference. For instance, how many reading this have heard the voice of Umm Kulthūm, 'unquestionably the most famous singer in the 20th-century Arab world' (her funeral in 1975 was an even bigger event than President Nasser's)? Sorrell makes her as fascinating a figure as Potter makes Adelina Patti. You can



Adelina Patti: a fascinating figure in *A History of Singing*

hear them both on YouTube, yet, despite Sorrell's considerable skill, I am no nearer to identifying or indeed appreciating the 'classical Arabic improvisatory singing, similar to the ghazal and thumrī performances and poetry recitations of India and Pakistan', let alone 'the two Arabic criteria for good voices, bahha and ghunna', which Kulthūm 'used to such expressive effect'.

Nevertheless, it is an impressive achievement to cover everything from Sumerian praise hymns (2094-2047BC) to Radiohead in a little over 300 pages, topped off with a useful reference section for those who wish to explore particular topics further. The price, however, would make even Patti's eyes water.

Jeremy Nicholas

## Music in the Landscape

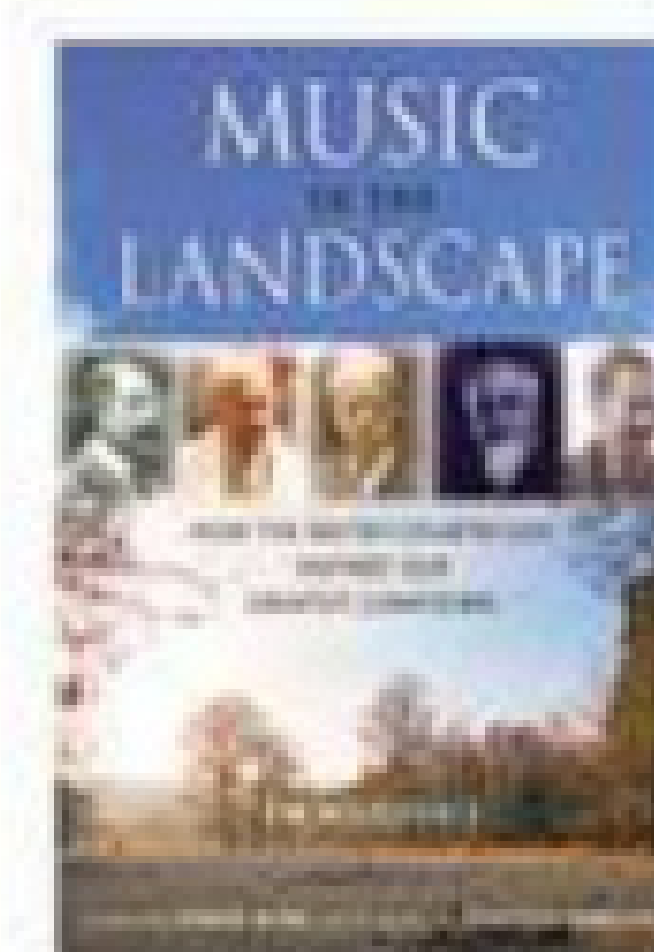
How the British Countryside Inspired our

Greatest Composers

By Em Marshall

Robert Hale Ltd, HB, 272pp, £25

ISBN 978-0-7090-8468-6



This book is primarily concerned with exploring and bringing to our attention the influence of the British countryside on the music of our finest composers. From Edward Elgar to Benjamin Britten, and also embracing selected earlier and later composers, Em Marshall writes with knowledge and enthusiasm about how terrain and weather have played their part in fashioning music that we know and love or have yet to discover. Apart from Elgar and Britten, composers such as Bax, Finzi, Holst, Ireland and Vaughan Williams are afforded chapters of their own, and equal status is given to Rutland Boughton, Hamilton Harty and Ernest John Moeran. Some composers are coupled – Granville Bantock and Joseph Holbrooke; Herbert Howells and Ivor Gurney.

It may be that our respective lists of the supreme British composers would not automatically include some of the above. Or we might wonder about Bliss, Bridge





Inspired by the British countryside: (from L-R) Imogen Holst, Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears

and Delius occupying only a few pages. Or that William Alwyn, Malcolm Arnold and Edmund Rubbra are grouped on one page as Northampton composers, and that Alan Rawsthorne and William Walton are similarly treated as being from Lancashire. Factually correct, perhaps, but Walton is one of the most significant British composers, and although he spent time on Ischia, surely his music is often as evocative as that of his contemporaries. Harrison Birtwistle gets a mention – although his interest in landscape tends to be underground. But Michael Tippett is entirely absent, despite the claims of his enchanted opera *The Midsummer Marriage* and his masterly Concerto for Double String Orchestra, which conjures up the countryside as much as many other British pieces (and its glorious slow movement is based on folksong).

However, Marshall's agenda is clear: it's the countryside that matters and therefore composers are elevated and relegated depending on their curiosity and employment of it. In a well-researched and lively tome, she takes us through various composers' lives and works, and provides – often through anecdote from the composers or their friends and associates – a narrative of their travels, or where they were when they wrote particular

works, and supports it all with numerous photographs. We can see the contours of the countryside in all its variety, from the lush and green to the wild and inhospitable. One question comes to mind, though: the degree to which the environment that these composers travelled through or lived in made it into their music. There are of course many expressly pastoral pieces with picturesque titles that specifically evoke seasons, landscapes and storylines – one might think of George Butterworth's *A Shropshire Lad*, which mixes Housman's literature with dramatic musical description. Yet, one hesitates with the symphonies of Elgar or Vaughan Williams to speculate on the extent to which extra-musical impetus imbues the musical argument, even when considering the latter composer's first three symphonies, involving the sea (to Walt Whitman's poetry), London, and the country (*A Pastoral Symphony*), all of which transcend their inspirations for some remarkably deep music that is more an emotional journey going beyond titular themes. (A few typos in the VW chapter render *A Sea Symphony* as 'The' rather than 'A' and his Third Symphony also lacks an 'A'.)

The book is successful, though, for the chapters are enlightening and very readable

(and helped in this respect by the use of a good-size font). It can be dipped into by composer, for even the most familiar piece is coloured by knowing about the composer's placement at the time of composition (even though one might still listen in abstract terms). And the music and composers that may be less familiar are similarly presented in pictorial terms (the numerous photographs are sharply chosen) and with an enthusiasm that makes one want to get to know them: indeed, there seem to be many still-buried treasures out there.

Not that British composers were the only monopolisers of their surroundings; there is Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony*, the dark-magic forest in Weber's *Der Freischütz*, the Rome that Respighi chronicled, and the heat, dust and fiestas of Falla's Spain, which also spellbound Debussy and Ravel. Then there's the Finland that may or may not be found in Sibelius's music. For the moment, though, it's all things British. Em Marshall's detailed script, attractively presented, should find itself in the lap of lovers of British music as well as anyone curious to know more about these composers' lives and the backdrops that stimulated them.

Colin Anderson



# REPLAY

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of reissues and archive recordings

## Inspiration floating on the airwaves

Bach cantatas from Audite and the Bach Guild; anniversary releases for Walter, Solti and Kreisler

Back in the late 1940s, Berlin's 'Radio in the American Sector' (RIAS) set out to record all of Bach's cantatas, a project initiated by the conductor **Karl Ristenpart**. The undertaking was never completed but, given the evidence of Audite's admirable nine-CD 'Bach Cantatas Project' – 29 cantatas out of a total of 107 recordings (25 works were recorded twice) – the existing legacy is well worth resurrecting. Some six years ago Accord issued a double-CD set featuring Ristenpart's performances (not these) of Cantatas Nos 56, 82, 140 (*Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*), 169 (*Gott soll allein mein Herze haben*), 211 (the *Coffee Cantata*) and 212. The present collection offers us versions of Nos 4, 7, 19, 21, 22, 31, 32, 37, 38, 39, 42, 47, 52, 56, 58, 76, 79, 88, 106, 108, 127, 140, 160, 164, 176, 178, 180, 199 and 202.

The varied vocal line-up is distinguished at the top end by the wonderful soprano Agnes Giebel and at the bottom by the young Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, with Helmut Krebs the featured tenor soloist. Ristenpart's manner could be described as securely 'pre-Karl Richter', in other words

*'Come the first chorus, Sternberg sets off at virtually twice Ristenpart's tempo'*

devotional but disciplined, with a tendency to slow tempi but plenty of rhythmic buoyancy in the faster movements.

Another collection of cantatas, early recordings made for commercial LPs this time, arrives from the Bach Guild and covers BWV21, 34, 46, 56 and 104, with **Jonathan Sternberg** conducting the Vienna Chamber Choir and Symphony Orchestra. There are some similarities in approach between the two, but also some significant differences: for example, in Cantata No 21,

although both conductors opt for a stately pace in the opening Sinfonia, come the first chorus, 'Ich hatte viel Bekümmernis in meinem Herzen', Sternberg flies off at virtually twice Ristenpart's tempo. The great draw on Sternberg's set is the tenor Hugues Cuénod, whose plaintive singing of the various tenor arias is uniquely moving. Both sets are well transferred but the overall sound quality is better on the Audite collection.

More elevated musicianship is packed into another of EMI's generous Icon box-sets, **'Bruno Walter: The Early Recordings'**. A live pre-war Vienna Philharmonic recording of Mozart's Requiem with Elisabeth Schumann, Kerstin Thorborg, Anton Dermota and Alexander Kipnis yields high artistic dividends, in spite of some less-than-perfect orchestral playing. Mozart was Walter's musical bread and butter but the transfer of his 1937 recording of the D minor Piano Concerto – where he conducts the VPO from the keyboard – is uncomfortably shrill, although most of the rest (symphonies by Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven and Schubert, plus the finest-ever version of *Die Walküre's* first act with Lehmann and Melchior) sounds well enough. Walter's live pre-war Mahler (*Das Lied von der Erde* and the Ninth Symphony) sounds a good deal better than that, the electrifying if occasionally flawed symphony performance especially. And for a bonus, journalist Jon Tolansky offers a characteristically sympathetic documentary.

The legendary 1952 EMI Philharmonia recording of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* under **Wilhelm Furtwängler**, Walter's contemporary, has reappeared yet again, this time in a nicely warmed and dynamically enhanced transfer from Pristine Audio. And for essential reference, Andromeda has released Acts 2 and 3 from Furtwängler's

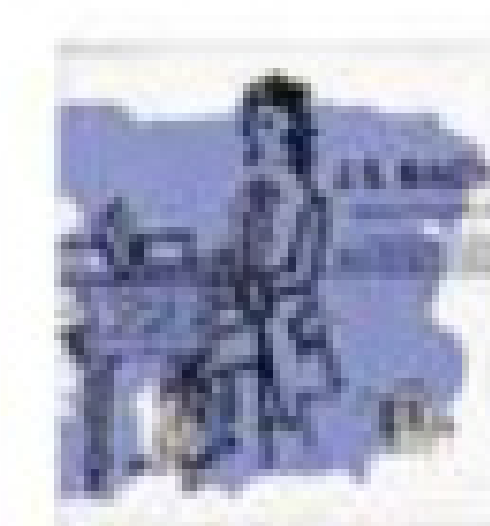
1947 live Berlin performance, where a very womanly Erna Schlüter replaces the regal Kirsten Flagstad, but the incomparably believable Tristan of Ludwig Suthaus is common to both. No comparison sound-wise – the broadcast suffers from numerous congested climaxes – but Furtwängler live always ensures an extra adrenalin rush.

And if you fancy a light-hearted French operatic diversion that seems to proceed at the speed of light under the energised baton of **Sir Thomas Beecham**, you might try Grétry's charming *Zémire et Azor* with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and a cast that includes Bernard Lefort, Michel Hamel and Michel Sénéchal. While hardly great music, Beecham's transforming baton certainly makes for quality entertainment.

### THE RECORDINGS



**'The RIAS Bach Cantatas Project: Berlin, 1949-1952' Ristenpart**  
Audite © ⑨ AUDITE21 415



**Bach Cantatas Sternberg**  
Bach Guild © ② ATM-CD1241



**'Bruno Walter: The Early Recordings - Berlin, 1949-1952'**  
EMI © ⑨ 679026-2



**Wagner Tristan und Isolde (r1952) Furtwängler**  
Pristine Audio ® ④ PACO067



**Wagner Tristan - Acts 2 & 3 (pp1947) Furtwängler**  
Andromeda © ② ANDRCD9108



**Grétry Zémire et Azor Beecham**  
Somm ® ② SOMM-BEECHAM030-2



## Lisztian fireworks from Solti and Fischer

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Bruno Walter's death, so one hopes that EMI's celebratory collection isn't a unique event. A number of conductor centenaries also occur this year, **Sir Georg Solti's** among them. Some of my own favourites among Solti's recordings have appeared on Australian Decca Eloquence, initially the Israel Philharmonic's version of Mendelssohn's *Italian Symphony* – an irresistible combination of youthful energy and 'old-world' stylistic gestures (especially among the strings). Now comes an all-Liszt double-pack dominated by Solti's memorable London and Paris recordings of selected tone-poems. Needless to say, he revels in the music's generous drama, its soaring melodic lines and filmic narratives. Both the LPO and the Orchestre de Paris play brilliantly, the former in *Les préludes*, *Prometheus* and *Festklänge*, the latter in *Mephisto Waltz* No 1, *Tasso* and (most impressively) *From the Cradle to the Grave*. This last, which encases a jagged 'Struggle for Existence' within ethereal outer movements, is among Liszt's most captivating orchestral scores. The second CD is filled with 1997 recordings of the six orchestrated *Hungarian Rhapsodies* by the Budapest Festival Orchestra under **Iván Fischer**. I attended the sessions at the Budapest Italian Institute and happily recall the care with which Fischer concocted a whole range of gypsy flavours, using the earthy twang of a cimbalom and colourful cadenzas. The orchestra's soloists are wonderful and the overall feel of the series authentic in the very best sense of the term.

### THE RECORDINGS



**Liszt** Tone-poems **Solti, Fischer**  
Decca Eloquence ⓑ ⓐ 480 4920



Bruno Walter's early recordings are available in a new EMI box-set: some shrillness but high artistic dividends

coarseness is shed from 'Samuel Goldenberg'), and if Rachmaninov's Second under Karajan is a touch over-refined, a monumental Tchaikovsky B flat by the same artists, though hardly a benchmark, is imposing. Weissenberg's often thrilling Bach wanders some way towards Glenn Gould in its crisp articulation but what most surprised me were the Schumann CDs, especially the *Fantasie* in C where, in the first movement, Weissenberg balances the top line and accompaniment in a way that makes the music positively cry. As for Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, the BPO more suggest plush upholstery than a lively dance floor, but in the 'I Got Rhythm' Variations the piano definitely takes the lead. Concertos by Mozart (reserved), Chopin (classical) and Prokofiev (muscular) all come off well and while Brahms's First Concerto under Giulini is slower than usual, Weissenberg's noble conception of the solo part fully justifies the tempo. In short, a set to challenge preconceptions rather than confirm them.

### THE RECORDINGS



**'Alexis Weissenberg:  
The Champagne Pianist'**  
EMI Ⓢ ⓐ 679086-2

## The immortal Fritz, well remembered

Yet another musical anniversary has prompted welcome activity on the CD front. The great Austrian violinist **Fritz Kreisler** died in 1962

and DG have come up with a two-CD 'A Tribute to Fritz Kreisler', its main attraction a beautiful Kreisler recital that Ruggiero Ricci recorded for American Decca (now owned by DG) in 1961, with Heifetz's accompanist Brooks Smith at the piano. Ricci could on occasion sound tremulous and overwrought on disc, but not here. Highlights include various 'mock-Baroque' miniatures with which Kreisler foxed the critics in the 1930s, much to their chagrin. Here Ricci's delicately expressive sound is irresistible but he also manages perky, well-characterised readings of such lively *morceaux* as *Liebesfreud* and *Schön Rosmarin*. The same set travels back as far as 1910-11 for early recordings by Kreisler himself, though there's formidable competition from Naxos and their series of 'Complete Kreisler Recordings'. Still, there's nothing like the charm of the man himself in context. Jascha Heifetz playing Gluck and Rimsky-Korsakov represents what was at the time a new world of the bow, and there are credible Kreisler 'sound-alikes' in the sweet-toned Christian Ferras, a very Kreislerian Shlomo Mintz and the droll, highly individual Gidon Kremer. Anne-Sophie Mutter pouts provocatively in *Liebesleid* but her playing is technically immaculate. A very nice collection, worth the price for the Ricci alone I'd say. ⓐ

### THE RECORDINGS



**'Liebesfreud Liebesleid -  
Homage to Fritz Kreisler'**  
DG ⓑ ⓐ 477 9942GM2

## A pianist for all reasons

Hearing the harrowing tale of young **Alexis Weissenberg** playing his way to freedom (on the accordion) from Nazi imprisonment cast a new light on the early years of an eventful life. EMI's new Icon collection serves a parallel role in purely musical terms, revealing a pianist who could be impassioned, brittle, imaginative, intimate, wilful, tonally alluring or barnstorming, sometimes running all seven qualities in quick succession. Rachmaninov's Third with Bernstein is a case in point, the opening reserved, the cadenza a sudden blood-rush. Mussorgsky's *Pictures* is played with precision and great character ('Bydlo' has a very martial tread while any suggestion of



# THE SPECIALIST'S GUIDE TO...

## *Romantic virtuoso pianists*

**Jeremy Nicholas** surveys the greatest recordings of an elite group of daredevil pianists who managed to combine phenomenal technique with the pure joy of making music



Earl Wild: played with a consummate technique and tonal beauty

It's not quite right to call this a Specialist's Guide to 'The Top 10 Pianists on Record', nor to 'The Top 10 Virtuoso Pianists', though some of the names would undoubtedly inhabit both categories. But it is a guide to a particular kind of pianist. How to describe the rare attributes of these elite artists?

To some listeners – even committed pianophiles – some of the repertoire in which they excel(led) is dismayingly frivolous. On the other side of the fence, as it were, are those who revel in the

pianistic equivalent of the high-wire act, and the thrill of hearing the near-impossible tossed off with aplomb. Pianophiles, secretly or not, tend to have a preference for one or the other while readily appreciating that, of course, neither 'side' has it all.

In an interview, the late Earl Wild said: 'The difference between playing a piece like d'Albert's *Scherzo* and, say, Beethoven's Op 111 is that in the d'Albert you are a decorator; in the Beethoven you are an architect. A pianist should be able to be both.' So what are we

looking for? A transcendent technique is the *sine qua non*; an omnivorous appetite for the literature of the piano; a certain generosity of spirit; the ability to convey the joy – and not the agony – of making music in public; a communicative ease; daredevilry, risk-taking, nothing played twice the same way.

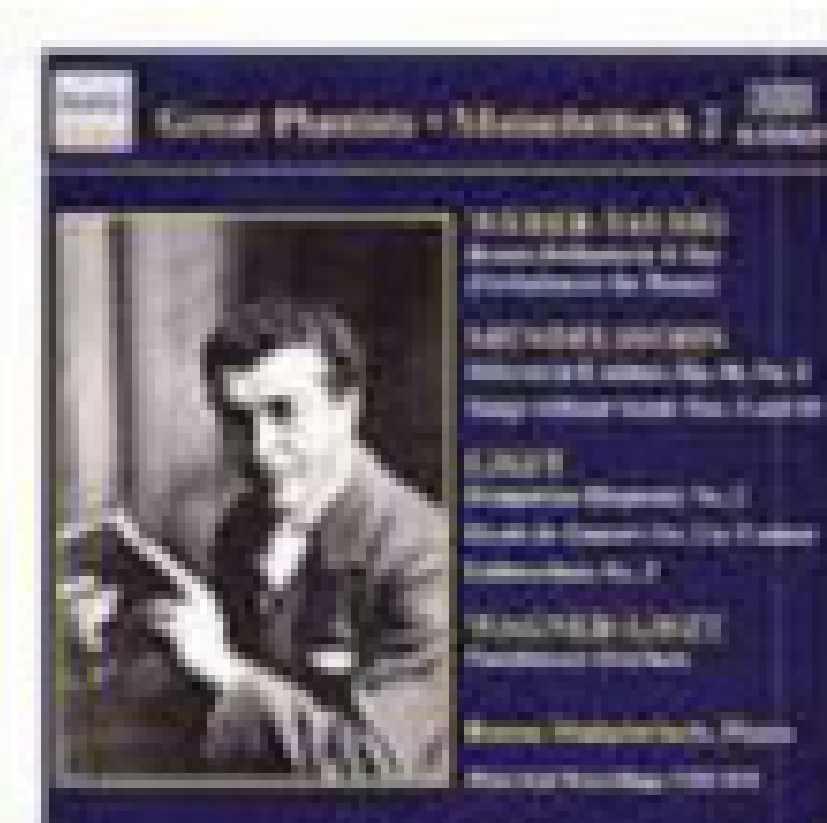
All these attributes are part of the alchemy: playing of musical intelligence but which, ultimately, comes from the heart and not the head, and leaves a warm afterglow. **G**





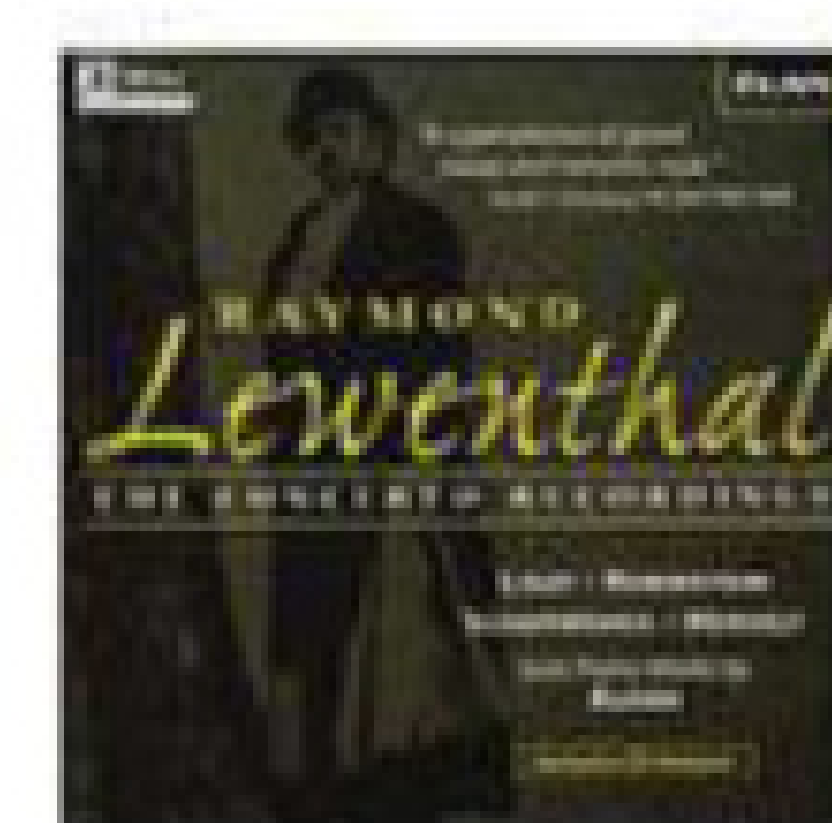
**10 Michael Ponti**  
(b1937)  
The Romantic Piano Concerto,  
Vol 3  
Vox (F) ② CDX5066

Ponti introduced an entire generation of pianophiles to long-forgotten music of the 19th and early 20th centuries in his series of recordings for Vox/Turnabout. Works by Tausig, Raff, Hiller, Litloff and many others found in Ponti their ideal exponent, a pianist unafraid to flaunt the flashy, flamboyant and dramatic side of the repertoire. Moszkowski's Piano Concerto is as beguiling as any and this is still the best version on disc.



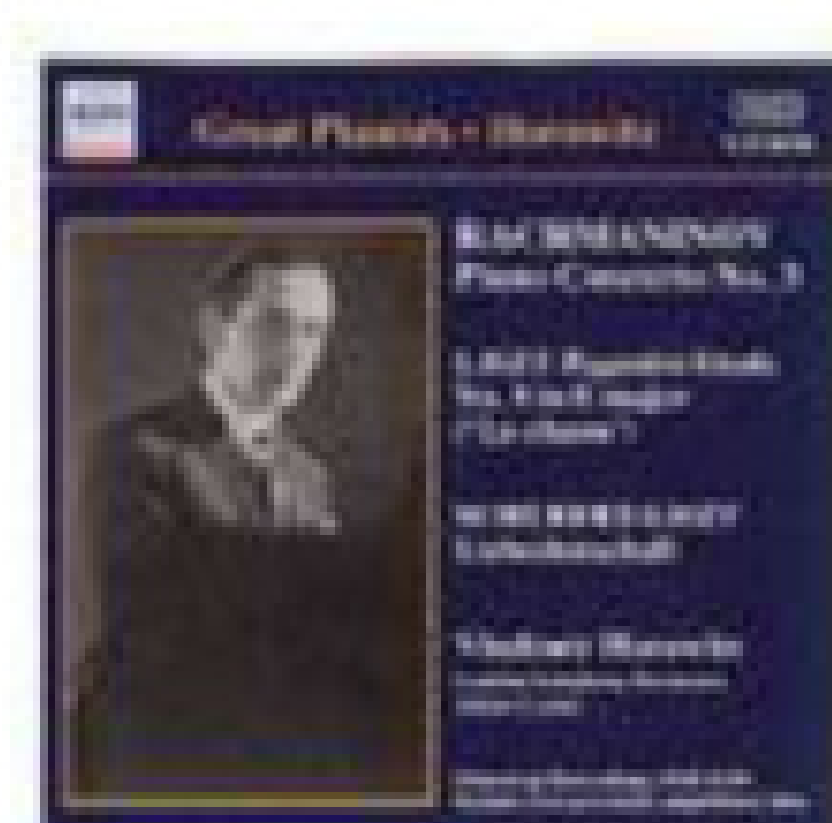
**9 Benno Moiseiwitsch**  
(1890-1963)  
Great Pianists:  
Moiseiwitsch, Vol 2  
Naxos (S) 8 110669

Moiseiwitsch made his first recording in 1916 and his last in 1961. Watching film of him - imperturbable, economical, patrician - in performances of grace and instinctive charm, and hearing the mellow, honey-coloured sound he conjured effortlessly from the keyboard, he now seems a world away. His most famous recording is a one-take miracle of the *Scherzo* from Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (arranged by Rachmaninov).



**8 Raymond Lewenthal**  
(1923-88)  
Raymond Lewenthal:  
The Concerto Recordings  
Elan (F) ② D CD82284 (1/70<sup>R</sup>)

Largely responsible for the revival of Alkan's music in the early 1960s and a host of other rarely heard solo works by the likes of Thalberg, Bortkiewicz and Jelobinsky, Lewenthal had an innate empathy with the virtuoso Romantic repertoire. His own arrangement of Liszt's *Totentanz* is electrifying but it is his recording of Henselt's F minor Concerto (conducted by Sir Charles Mackerras) that captures Lewenthal at his theatrical, barnstorming best.



**7 Vladimir Horowitz**  
(1903-89)  
Great Pianists: Horowitz  
Naxos (S) 8 110696

There were so many unique facets to Horowitz's playing: the unmistakable sound, the (sometimes wayward) musical imagination, the extraordinary power and speed...Yet alongside the famous spine-tingling bravura on display in Liszt, Rachmaninov and Tchaikovsky is some wonderfully delicate playing in miniatures such as Scriabin's little Prelude in E major, Op 11 No 9, surely one of the greatest of all piano recordings (IDIS IDIS6602).



**6 Josef Hofmann**  
(1876-1957)  
The Complete Josef Hofmann,  
Vol 1: Chopin Piano Concertos  
VAI (F) VAIA1002 (2/92<sup>R</sup>)

The first great pianist to make a recording, Hofmann wowed the concert halls of the world for well over half a century until alcoholism got the better of him. His commercial studio recordings are variable but his live recordings - his Golden Jubilee Concert (5/93<sup>R</sup>), Casimir Hall recital (Marston 52014) and broadcasts of the two Chopin concertos - reveal the *echt* Hofmann and the unique voice of one of the greatest pianists in history.



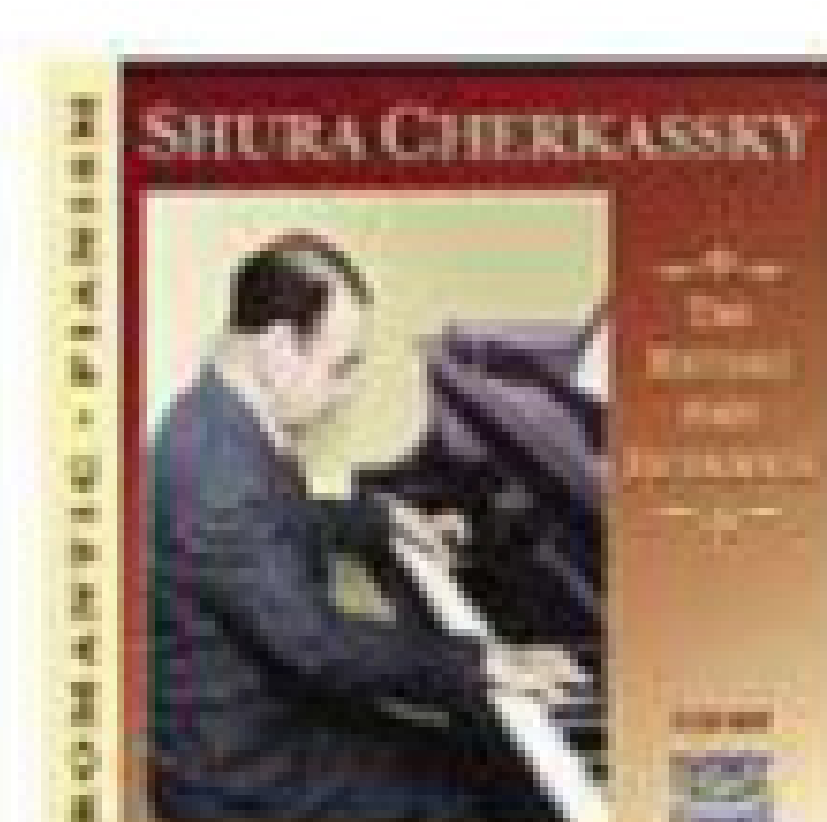
**5 Grigory Ginzburg**  
(1904-61)  
Ginzburg:  
His Early Recordings, Vol 1  
APR (M) APR5667 (A/08)

You can tell what a special kind of pianist Ginzburg was from his 1948 recording of Chopin's Op 25 Etudes but it was the music of Liszt with which he was particularly associated. His ease and stylishness in operatic paraphrases like *The Marriage of Figaro* Fantasy (Liszt-Busoni) and his own transcription of 'Largo al factotum' from *The Barber of Seville* (Rossini) are pure pianistic joy.



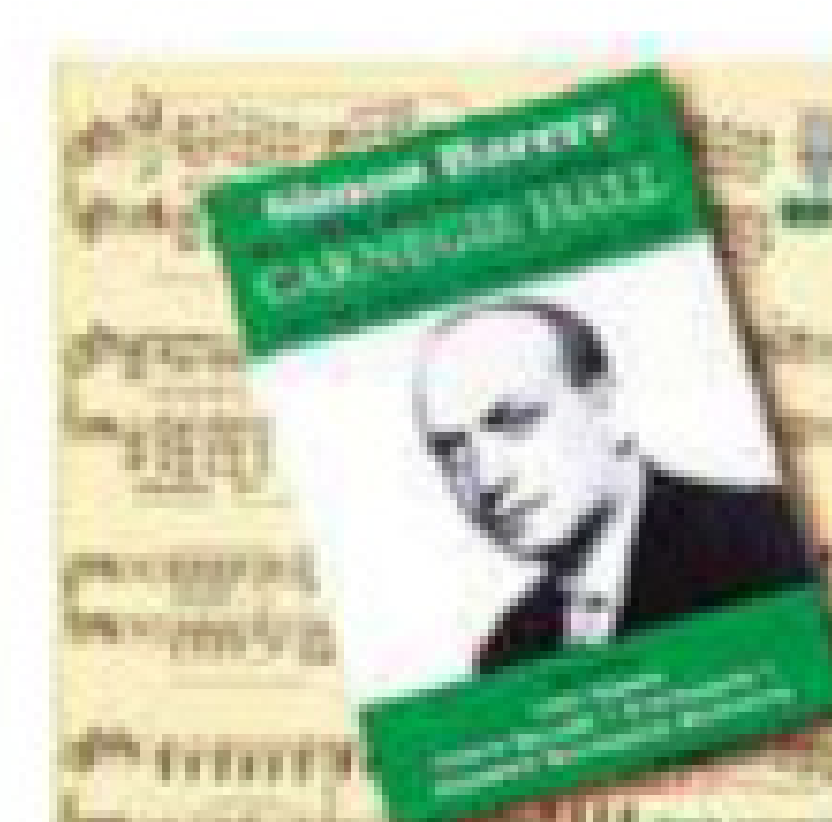
**4 Georges Cziffra**  
(1921-94)  
Piano Virtuosos: Cziffra,  
Moiseiwitsch and Bolet  
Medici Arts (F) DVD 308 5288 (12/08)

In the late 1950s, Cziffra's recording of his own arrangement of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Flight of the Bumblebee* (9/58) seemed to many the result of some electronic trickery; his whip-crack reflexes seemed physically impossible. Cziffra set a new benchmark for bravura pianism, heard at its incandescent best in his own transcriptions of Liszt. The sequence of Cziffra warming up before a BBC TV recital in 1962 is justly celebrated.



**3 Shura Cherkassky**  
(1909-95)  
The Historic 1940s Recordings  
Ivory Classics (M) 72003

'Capricious', 'mercurial' and 'unpredictable' are just three adjectives used routinely to describe Cherkassky, whose thought-provoking, entertaining concerts remain cherished memories for those lucky enough to have heard him. His recording career stretched from 1923 to 1995, his repertoire from Lully to Stockhausen. Has anyone raised more smiles in a recital with delicious encores like Rachmaninov's *Polka de WR* or Morton Gould's *Boogie Woogie Etude*?

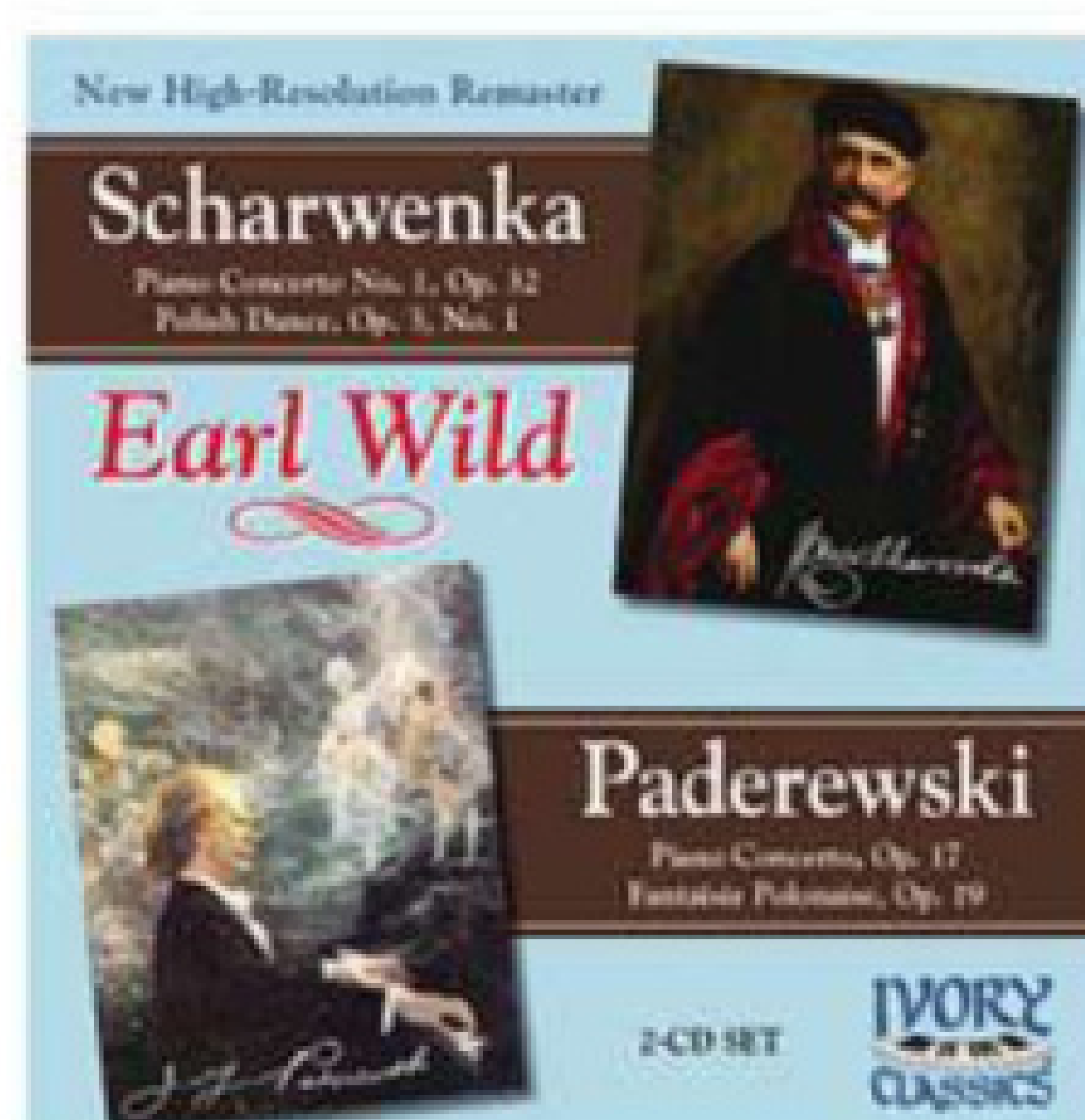


**2 Simon Barere**  
(1896-1951)  
Live Recordings at  
Carnegie Hall, Vol 3  
APR (M) APR5623

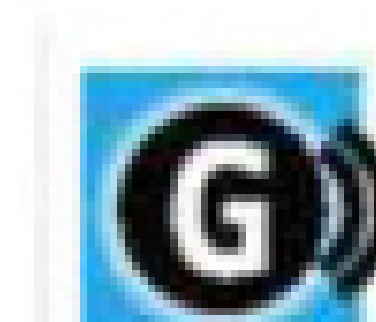
A pupil of Glazunov and a classmate of Horowitz, Barere collapsed and died during a performance of Grieg's Piano Concerto in Carnegie Hall. This venue was where his son made private recordings in the late 1940s, including astonishing performances of Blumenfeld's *Etude for the Left Hand* and Balakirev's *Islamey*. These and the discs he made for HMV from 1934-36 (APR6002) capture one of the most thrilling and elegant of all pianists.

**1 Earl Wild** (1915-2010)

Earl Wild plays Scharwenka's Piano Concerto No 1 Ivory Classics (M) ② 77003 (A/07)



Few pianists have rivalled the breadth and adventurousness of Wild's repertoire (Buxtehude to Barber and beyond, with not many gaps in between), his consummate technique and tonal beauty. Wild had it all. He played with a light hand and a light heart, never better than in the brilliant array of transcriptions heard on discs like 'The Art of the Transcription' (Audiofon CD72008-2), 'The Virtuoso Piano' (Vanguard, 8/92, with works by Herz, Godowsky, d'Albert and Thalberg), and in his own life-enhancing *Seven Virtuoso Etudes* on Gershwin songs (10/90). Among the more than 30 concertos he recorded, arguably the finest is of Scharwenka's Piano Concerto No 1 from 1969.



Visit the Gramophone Player at [gramophone.co.uk](http://gramophone.co.uk) to sample an excerpt from Jeremy Nicholas's top choice, Earl Wild playing Scharwenka

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# THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

## *The essence of Spain, definitively captured in Albéniz's masterpiece*

**Iberia** poses a complex cultural as well as vast technical challenge for all pianists – but most particularly for those whose roots aren't steeped in Albéniz's Spain. **Bryce Morrison** charts the interpretative landscape

Albéniz's *Iberia* raises a fundamental question: if this incomparable 12-piece tapestry of Southern Spain (with one side-trip to Madrid) is the masterpiece claimed by composers as distinguished as Debussy, Fauré and Messiaen, why is it not in the repertoire of so many pianists? Writing of 'El Albaicín' (Book 3), Debussy stated: 'Few works are worth as much. Here we recognise the atmosphere of Spanish evenings scented with carnations and brandy.' For him, 'Eritaña' (Book 4) was a 'morning glory... Never has music achieved such diversified, such colourful impressions. Our eyes close as though bedazzled by too great a wealth of images.' For Fauré, 'there is only [one] Albéniz on the face of the earth that is worthy of being Albéniz', while, for Messiaen, Albéniz was 'up among the stars'. Such compliments were not paid lightly. It is after all worth remembering that both composers offered less than generous estimates of other composers.

An obvious answer to my question lies in *Iberia*'s immense difficulty. Blanche Selva's initial response when asked to give the premiere of *Iberia* was one of shock and

despair. Like Rubinstein when he was first presented with Szymanowski's Second Sonata, she declared it unplayable, before going on to give the first of many performances. Making a virtue of elaboration as opposed to economy (much of *Iberia* is written on three staves), Albéniz's magnum opus looms like a daunting and inaccessible mountain peak. Yet there is a more subtle reason for such neglect. Many years ago I asked Horowitz whether he played *Iberia*, to which he replied, 'I'm a Russian, not a Spanish gypsy.' A telling evasion by a great pianist when asked to confront an exotic and alien idiom – a sense of a lack of poetic empathy.

It is therefore surely significant that the greatest interpreters – not to give the game away too soon – are all Spanish. True, Rubinstein, a Polish Jew, was celebrated for his performance of *Iberia* but even he felt that Albéniz 'needed a helping hand' and, no doubt fearing criticism from Spain's musical aristocracy for his additions and subtractions, and for changing such dense material into a slimmer and flashing brilliance, he never recorded the complete cycle. But Rubinstein,

who once claimed 'I adore Spain as one adores a woman', was the exception. *Iberia* isn't part of the repertoire of, say, Pollini, Perahia, Zimerman, Argerich or indeed Brendel, and rarely figures in the programmes of a younger generation of pianists.

### TOO COOL, TOO CAREFUL

Despite these strictures there are a large number of recordings of *Iberia* – many of them, perhaps not surprisingly, ill-advised. **Aldo Ciccolini**, for instance, reduces Albéniz to salon proportions, showing a diffidence out of character with such fullness, such a glowing and heated idiom. From him 'Evocación' is dry and matter-of-fact, and the girl of Rondo ('Rondeña') seems to find her way forward in the dark with too little spring in her step. Ciccolini's throw-away gesture at the end is somehow typical of his restricted palette and gesture. 'Eritaña', too, while graceful and fluent at one level, lacks character and intensity. And it is difficult to warm to a pianist for whom Albéniz's exuberant dynamic range – from quadruple *piano* to quadruple *forte* – means so little.





Capturing the vibrancy, character and colour of Seville, here depicted by Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida (1863-1923), poses a challenge for some pianists in Iberia



**Nicholas Unwin** always allows you your own space, never forcing the issue, yet he, too, is insufficiently vivid and compulsive. He achieves a special sense of a receding carnival and vision at the end of 'El Corpus Christi en Sevilla', but his technique is pushed close to the limit in 'Lavapiés', while in 'Málaga' prime voices are too often engulfed in the surrounding dense and wriggling figuration. *Iberia* with a cooling agent is surely a contradiction in terms and there are too many timid withdrawals from even the strongest, most seductive and inviting issues.

**Rosa Torres-Pardo** on the other hand *is* Spanish yet her 'live' performance given before an audience that included Alicia de Larrocha, while never less than committed, is rhythmically flaccid and her use of *rubato* often suggests desperate pauses for breath. Every item seems endlessly extended and there is too little sense of difficulties subsumed or resolved in Albéniz's alternating langour and passion.

**Artur Pizarro**, also of Latin origin, is another pianist whose caution robs *Iberia* of too much of its colour and vibrancy. Where is the tingle let alone the boggle factor in, say, 'Triana', and why so sluggish an *Allegretto moderato* at the start of 'Almería'? Too musicianly to be 'on pilot', this *Iberia* is surely soft-centered when it should burn with conviction.

**Ricardo Requejo** makes heavy weather of Albéniz's complex and idiosyncratic virtuosity. Indeed, in the cruelly demanding 'Lavapiés' (which Albéniz asks with mischievous irony to be played with 'great facility'), his *rubato* plays havoc with the music's line and impetus, and threatens to come to a complete halt. There is an unforgivably indifferent start to 'El Albaicín' with its imitation of guitars and underlying melancholic direction. As Sequiera Costa once put it to a student of mine after her neat and freshly laundered but unevocative performance of 'Rondeña': 'Spanish music not always so happy,' hinting at that alternating elation and despair, that blueness at the heart of

musical Spain and its corollary, South America. And, speaking of South America, **Pola Baytelman** complements her recording of *Iberia* with a selection from Ginastera, a combination suggesting the grass roots of Argentinian music while at the same time telling you of a development or regression according to taste (many Spanish pianists of the old school frown at what they see as a vulgarisation of their own jealously guarded idiom). In *Iberia* Baytelman is clearly in love with Albéniz's luxuriance, lavishly rather than lightly fragranced in 'Evocación', but too self-consciously expressive in 'El puerto' to achieve sufficient drive and momentum. She comes into her own in her animated 'Rondeña' but, again, misses the biting accentuation ('sec, sec, sec') as 'Almería' swirls towards its climax. Later, in 'Lavapiés', Baytelman loses her rhythmic focus as the torrents of notes kick in. And here, surely, is an instance of paradox, namely that the crazed energy and orgiastic clangour of 'Lavapiés' is achieved through discipline rather than looseness. Play fast and loose with the score and the strength of its argument is weakened.

#### TURNING UP THE HEAT

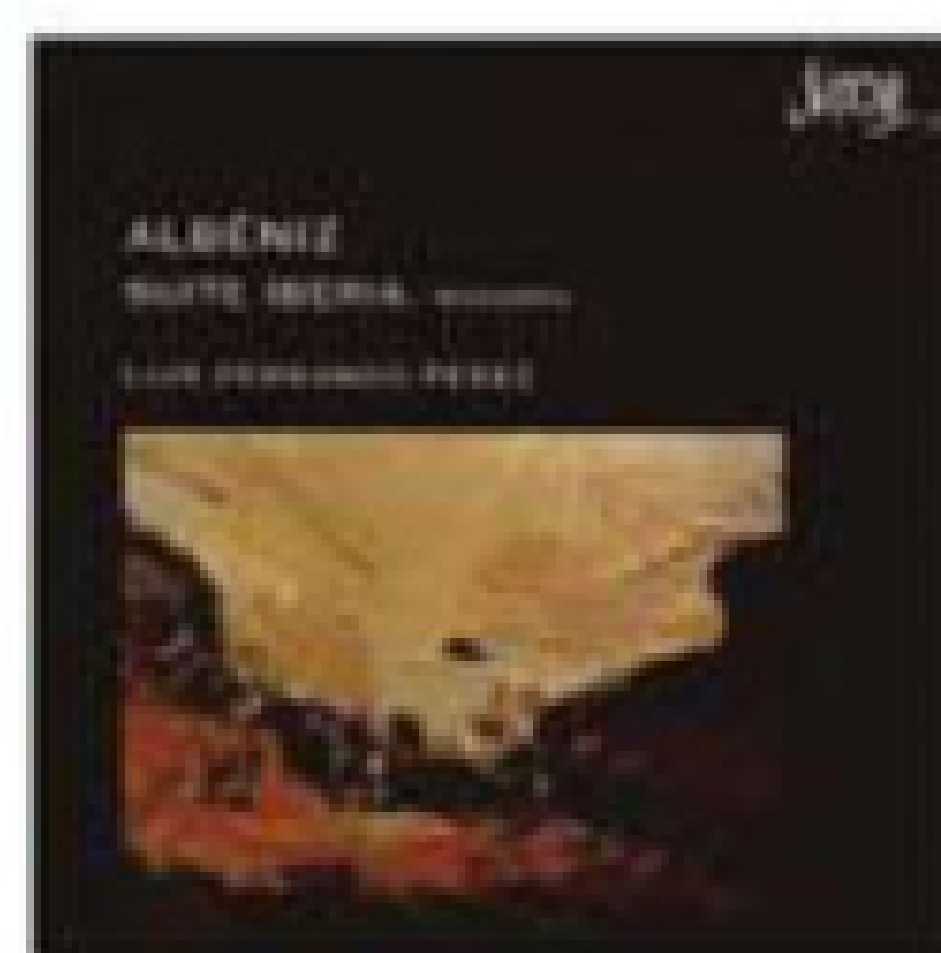
Moving on to performances on a different and higher level, **Martin Jones** is fluent and considered even when overly introspective, retreating gratefully into shadows and repose whenever possible. Is 'Triana' truly *con anima*, and why so much the demure lady in 'Rondeña'? Nonetheless, Jones's musicianship is paramount, though a sudden rush of blood to the head at the climax of 'El Albaicín' throws into relief a lack of daring elsewhere. If only there had been more of this.

**Yoram Ish-Hurwitz** may prompt familiar reservations, but his fluency and dexterity are no mean feat given *Iberia*'s challenge and complexity. His 'Evocación' may sound open-ended compared with the finest versions, but it is never less than sensitive to Albéniz's cloudy romanticism, flaring into heady passion

when required. Ish-Hurwitz makes something dark and insinuating out of the central section of 'El Corpus Christi en Sevilla' and shows real virtuosic flair and command in the whirl of activity before the reflective coda. He is brisk and unforced in 'Rondeña' and it is only later in 'Triana' that such relaxation takes on a laissez-faire quality when Albéniz cries out in this paso doble for greater fervour and involvement. Such a civilised view of some often very uncivilised pages makes for an oddly tensionless 'El Polo' – the most uncompromisingly Spanish of all the pieces in *Iberia*. Again, the surprise breakaway at the end of 'Lavapiés' is normalised and missing an almost wilful touch of the grotesque.

With **José Maria Pinzolas** we enter a more intense and energised world. After a sultry and care-laden 'Evocación' there is real force and swagger to 'El Corpus Christi en Sevilla'; the girl from Ronda is more feisty than charming (her fist-shaking departure, from Pinzolas, makes her someone not to be trifled with) and an oddly cautious view of 'Almería' (as with Alan Bennett's fictional portrait of the Queen reading Henry James, you feel like exclaiming, 'Oh, do get on with it'). But the heat is on again in 'Triana'. 'El Polo' is vivid and Pinzolas races through 'Lavapiés' with a welcome relish rather than caution. 'Jerez' is sultry and mysterious while the concluding 'Eritaña' is propelled at a fierce *Allegro* rather than *Allegretto grazioso*.

If energy (enough for several pianists) and enthusiasm were everything, then **Roger Muraro**'s performance would ride high in the pantheon. He send volts of electricity racing through the swirling figuration of 'El Corpus Christi en Sevilla', and if he takes a firm hand to pages requiring greater poise and finesse, the playing is undeniably thrilling, bursting out of studio confines with an almost punch-drunk virtuosity. Characteristically, he takes things close to the edge in 'Málaga' and whirls us through 'Eritaña' with an exhilarating sense of Albéniz revelry.

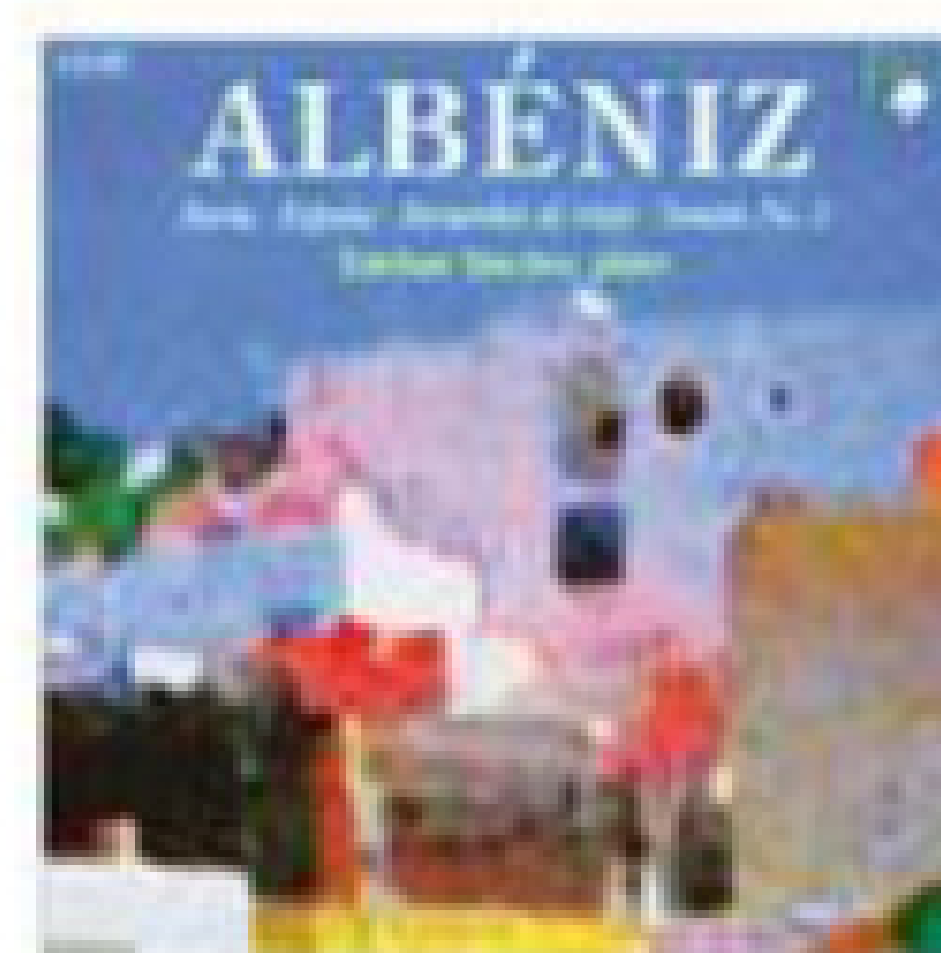


#### Innocence and experience

**Luis Fernando Pérez**

Verso Ⓢ ② VRS2045

A young pianist unafraid to go his own way. Backed by superb technique and a profusion of ideas, here are colour, inflection and brio in super-abundance.



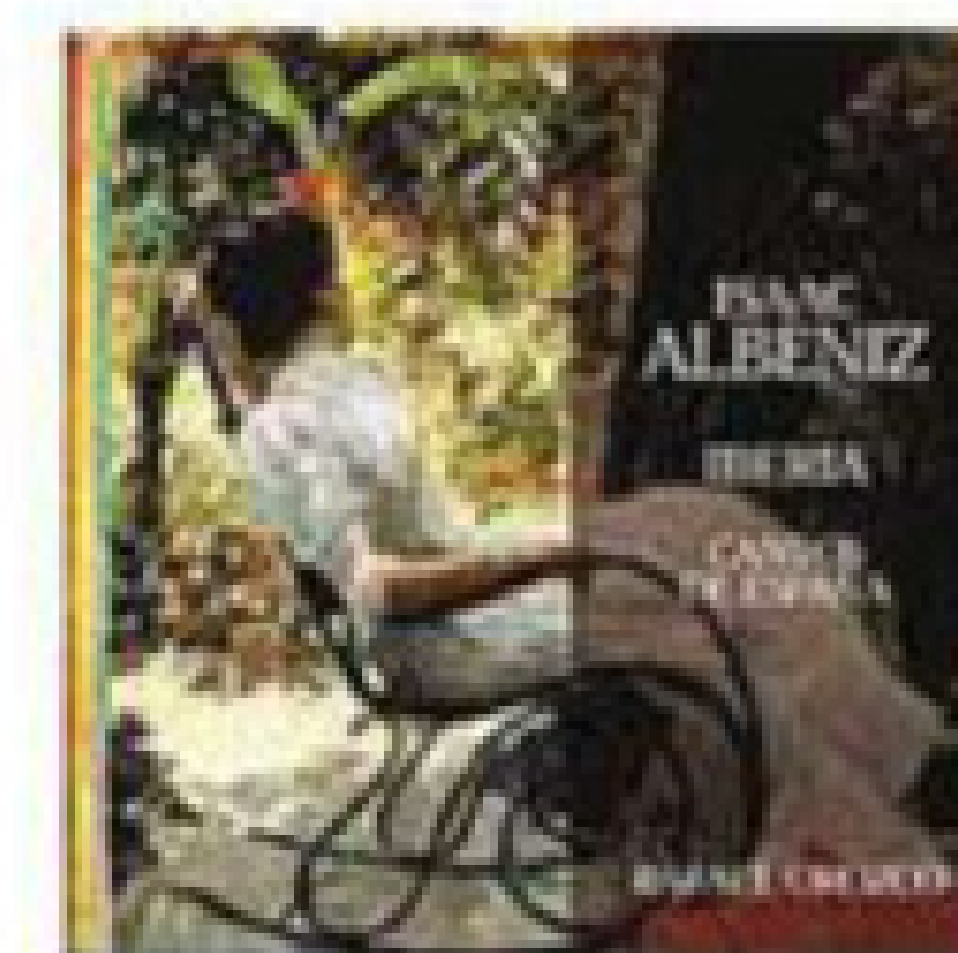
#### The elemental Iberia

**Esteban Sánchez**

Ensayo Ⓢ ② ENYCD9712 (A/98);

Brilliant Classics Ⓢ ③ 92398

Praised by some of the 20th century's great pianists, this reclusive artist does nothing by half, with enthralling results.



#### Poetic richness

**Rafael Orozco**

Naïve Ⓢ ② V4663

A pianist who remained true to his Andalucían roots, combining sensitivity and drama to produce a revelatory reading.





Fauré, at Albéniz's piano, obliges his host (right) and his daughter, Laura, with an impromptu recital. Fauré was one of many contemporaries who championed Albéniz's work

And now I come to **Mark-André Hamelin** and a rethink about my original estimate in *Gramophone* (June 2005). Here is a pianist who laughs Albéniz's technical challenge to scorn. Indeed, I doubt whether *Iberia* has been played with greater facility in its entire history. And there, surely, is the rub, a situation where depth of expression is brushed aside in the interests of a pianistically dazzling but glib alternative. 'Evocación', on the other hand, is overdone. Does it really need such lavish attention? This is surely sugar-sweet. Hamelin's way with 'Rondeña' is more brilliant than evocative and there is too much playing for effect in 'Triana'. True, there are those who would give an arm and a leg (or at the very least a finger) to play with such assurance and aplomb, yet this is arguably the least Spanish of performances. The possessor of a visceral command and dexterity, Hamelin will




## SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

DATE / ARTISTS	RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)
1962 Larrocha	EMI (M) ② 361514-2 (11/92*); (S) ⑧ 629486-2
1966 Ciccolini	EMI (S) ② 476906-2
1968/69 Sánchez	Ensayo (F) ② ENYCD9712 (A/98); Brilliant Classics (S) ③ 92398
1972 Larrocha	Decca (B) ② 448 191-2DF2
1980 Requejo	Claves (F) ② 50 80003/04 (6/88); Brilliant Classics (S) ② 99491
1986 Larrocha	Decca (F) ② 417 887-2DH2 (6/88); (B) ② 478 0388DOR2
1991 Pinzolas	DG (S) ② ④ 459 430-2GTA2
1992 Orozco	Naive (F) ② V4663
1995 Baytelman	Elan (F) ② ELAN82288 (A/98)
1997 Muraro	Accord (M) ② 465 357-2
1998 Jones	Nimbus (B) ② NI7718/9; (S) ④ NI5595/8
1999 Unwin	Chandos (F) CHAN9850
2004 Hamelin	Hyperion (F) ② CDA67476/7 (6/05)
2004 Torres-Pardo	Glossa (F) ② GSP98005 (9/07)
2006 Pérez	Verso (F) ② VRS2045
2007/09 Ish-Hurwitz	Turtle (F) ② ④ TR75529/30 (oas)
2009 Pizarro	Linn (F) ② ④ CKD355 (6/10)

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The last and greatest word on *Iberia* was spoken by Alicia de Larrocha in her supreme 1962 reading for EMI

surely deepen and enrich his reading of *Iberia* over the years.

#### RIISING TO PRISTINE GLORY

And so to the magic four. **Luis Fernando Pérez** is clearly among the most individual and gifted pianists of today's generation. And, as in his more recent disc of Granados's *Goyescas*, his playing is audaciously personal and has an improvisatory freedom and coloration very much his own. He achieves a superb sense of contrast, of innocence and experience in 'Rondeña', and his *rubato* in 'Almería' tugs suggestively against the music's line, his stress and emphasis potent and highly charged. His 'Triana' is more modest and thoughtful than expected and there are moments in 'El Albaicín' when you almost hear his teacher, Alicia de Larrocha, appealing for greater stability. Yet what fervour in the central *con anima* and what imagination in 'El Polo'. In 'Málaga', Pérez's dalliance may once more raise eyebrows, but his range of colour and nuance will surely win over even the most hardened sceptic. 'Jerez' is rich and intense and an overwhelming buoyancy and conviction in 'Eritaña' concludes this outstanding performance.

Then there is **Rafael Orozco**, a true son of Spain and of Andalucía in particular. What is so striking here is the way he subdues his electrifying technique to the interests of poetic richness and significance. By his own admission he waited many years before committing *Iberia* to disc and the result is a revelation. Many will recall Orozco's brilliant 'El Corpus Christi en Sevilla' at the 1966 Leeds competition, yet years later his performance was clarified and refined, everything being given time to speak

('to weep and sing and sigh' in Liszt's immortal definition of a true virtuoso). Here the music achieves its fullest poetic voice. 'Evocación', too, evolves into a truly brooding night piece rather than an evasive Nocturne. How adept he is at those retreats from blazing sunlight into a mysterious shadowland, almost as if he had entered the extraordinary mosque in his native Córdoba. For Orozco the girl from Rondo is not without her flirtatious charms, but she is no less lost in reverie before her abrupt awakening into reality. Always he plays down outer display, favouring instead a more musing and lasting quality. Even in 'Lavapiés' he is, above all, poetically resonant, ending as if some ghostly spectre had appeared. In 'Jerez' he achieves a near mystical trance-like state, and even 'Eritaña' is tinged with sadness, a bittersweet essence at the very heart of *Iberia*; something accessible to few pianists.

And now a truly extraordinary pianist whose reputation would have remained cloistered within Spain were it not for the highest recognition. For Alfred Cortot **Esteban Sánchez** was 'a musical genius', an opinion shared by Clara Haskil and later confirmed by Daniel Barenboim who asked, 'How is it possible? How can Spain have hidden away a performer of this class?'. Sánchez had little use for publicity, retreating into a private world. But when you listen to his *Iberia* you may well repeat Barenboim's question, for this performance blazes with what I can only describe as a dark sun. Everything is experienced in the raw, so to speak, without a care for received wisdom, custom or convention. Is this how Albéniz himself sounded, an ultimate free spirit where everything is delivered with startling boldness and audacity? Sánchez's 'El Polo' is all nervous

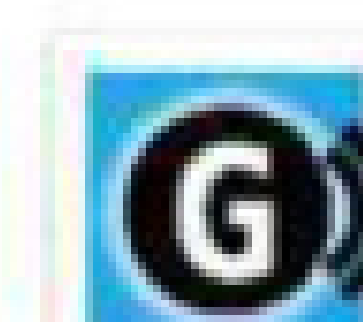


#### THE OVERALL CHOICE

##### Alicia de Larrocha

EMI Ⓜ ② 361514-2 (11/92R); Ⓢ ⑧ 629486-2

Alicia de Larrocha revisited *Iberia* in the studio no fewer than four times. But her 1962 recording, reissued by EMI, is her finest. Her reflexes then were razor-sharp, and her technique and verve undimmed.



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fits and starts, and in 'Lavapiés' he achieves a unique sense of the grotesque, of something menacing, splintered and distorted. What modernity, what surrealist poetry in 'Málaga', how determinedly unclad in 'Eritaña' with an insistence on an entanglement of ideas like a mine of serpents. Coming from Sánchez, *Iberia* is as elemental as anything in Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*.

Finally to **Alicia de Larrocha**, who is to Spanish music what Schnabel is to Beethoven, Rubinstein to Chopin, Gieseking to Debussy and Thyssens-Valentin to Fauré. EMI's reissue of a performance dating from 1962 confirms a status that has intimidated other pianists (including Claudio Arrau) into leaving a field that made competition impossible. And although more 'classic' than the savage and original Sánchez, there is no question of compromise. Even when tautly disciplined (Larrocha was always a stickler for rhythmic focus and precision) the playing is lavishly coloured and inflected. A more awe-inspiring mastery in 'El puerto' is hard to imagine, and 'the incomparable cities of southern Spain' (Larrocha) emerge not in sepia tints but in all their first pristine glory. In 'Triana' Larrocha's gaze is surely fixed on a standard unknown to lesser mortals, and the start of 'El Albaicín' has all the pulsing rhythm, coloration and underlying sadness you could wish for. I would count her performance of 'Málaga', too, among the most pungent examples of virtuosity on record. Modest to the last, de Larrocha, never happy with her work, recorded *Iberia* four times, but the EMI version is the one to have, obliging one to say *Iberia* is Alicia de Larrocha, Alicia de Larrocha is *Iberia*, her recording a milestone in her long and glorious career. **G**





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### GRAMOPHONE DISC OF THE MONTH

**Tchaikovsky/Mendelssohn:** Violin Concertos; Ray Chen/Swedish RSO/Daniel Harding **Sony 88697 984102 £12.99**

### EDITOR'S CHOICE

<b>Britten:</b> Songs & Proverbs of William Blake etc; Roderick Williams/Burnside <b>Naxos 857 2600 £5.99</b>	<b>Langgaard:</b> String Quartets Vol 1; Nightingale String Quartet <b>Da Capo 622 0575 (SACD) £12.99</b>
<b>"Fantasia"</b> (Scriabin, Rachmaninov, Scarlatti etc); Yuja Wang (piano) <b>DG 479 0052 £12.99</b>	<b>Mahler:</b> Symphony No 7; Bamberger Symphoniker/Jonathan Nott <b>TUDOR 7176 (SACD) £13.99</b>
<b>"The Grandeur of the Baroque";</b> David Russell (Guitar) <b>Telarc TEL 33223-02 £12.99</b>	<b>Poulenc:</b> Complete Chamber Works; London Concord Ensemble <b>Champs Hill Records CHRCD 028 (2 CDs) £11.99</b>
<b>Handel:</b> Concerti Grossi Op 3; Concerto Copenhagen/Lars Ulrik Mortensen <b>CPO 7774882 £12.99</b>	<b>Scriabin:</b> Piano Works; Olli Mustonen <b>Ondine ODE 11842 £12.99</b>
<b>Howells:</b> Requiem; Choir of Trinity College, Cambridge/Stephen Layton <b>Hyperion CDA 67914 £12.99</b>	<b>DVD - Vivaldi:</b> Orlando Furioso; Lemieux/Larmore/Spinosi <b>Niave DR 2148 £22.99</b>

### OUR PICK OF THE MONTH'S NEW RELEASES

<b>Bach:</b> Bm Mass; Collegium Vocale Gent/Herreweghe <b>Phi LPO 004 (2 CDs) £19.99</b>	<b>Handel:</b> Esther; Dunedin Consort/Butt <b>Linn CKD 397 (2 SACDs) £14.99</b>
<b>Bach:</b> Motets; Monteverdi Choir/English Baroque Soloists/Gardiner <b>Soli Deo Gloria SDG 716 £12.99</b>	<b>Handel:</b> Theodora; Upshaw/Daniels/OAE/Christie <b>Glyndebourne GFOCD 014-96 (3 CDs) £24.99</b>
<b>Beethoven:</b> Bagatelles; Steven Osborne <b>Hyperion CDA 67879 £12.99</b>	<b>Hamilton Harty:</b> String Quartets/Piano Quintet; Goldner Quartet/Piers Lane <b>Hyperion CDA 67927 (2 CDs) £12.99</b>
<b>Beethoven:</b> Piano Sonatas Vol 1; Jean-Efflam Bovouzet <b>Chandos CHAN 10720 (3 CDs) £25.99</b>	<b>"Live from Mugano Festival 2011";</b> Martha Argerich and Friends <b>EMI 644 7012 (3 CDs) £16.99</b>
<b>Bellini:</b> Il Pirata; Giannattasio/Bros/Tezier/LPO/Parry <b>Opera Rara ORC 45 (3 CDs) £34.99</b>	<b>Mozart:</b> Apollo et Hyacinthus; Classical Opera/Page <b>Linn CKD 398 (SACD) £14.99</b>
<b>Birtwistle:</b> Complete String Quartets; Arditti Quartet <b>Aeon AECD 1217 £12.99</b>	<b>Mozart:</b> Symphony 36/Piano Concerto 24/etc; cond Blech (1954) <b>First Hand Records FHR 15 £11.99</b>
<b>Brahms:</b> Clarinet Sonatas; Emma Johnson/John Lenehan <b>Nimbus NI 6153 £13.99</b>	<b>Schubert:</b> String Quartets "Death & the Maiden/Rosamunde"; Endellion Qt <b>Warner 2564 664232 £6.99</b>
<b>Britten:</b> War Requiem; Bostridge/Keenlyside/Cvila/LSO/Nosedá <b>LSO Live LSO 0719 (2 SACDs) £13.99</b>	<b>Schumann:</b> Chamber Music; Nash Ensemble <b>Hyperion CDA 67923 £12.99</b>
<b>Bruckner:</b> Symphony 9 (4 movement version); BPO/Rattle <b>EMI 952 9692 £12.99</b>	<b>Schumann:</b> Piano Quartet/Quintet; Melnikov/Jerusalem Qt <b>Harmonia Mundi HMC 902122 £13.99</b>
<b>Debussy:</b> La Mer/Images/etc; Orch National de France/Gatti <b>Sony 88697 974002 £12.99</b>	<b>Shostakovich:</b> Symphonies 2 & 15; RLPO/Petrenko <b>Naxos 857 2708 £5.99</b>
<b>Debussy:</b> Preludes/Transcriptions; Lubimov/Zuev <b>ECM 476 4735 (2 CDs) £21.99</b>	<b>"This is the day" - Music for Royal Occasions;</b> Cambridge Singers/Rutter <b>Collegium COLCD 136 £12.99</b>
<b>Delius:</b> "English Masterworks" (Song s of Sunset/etc); Aarhus SO/Holten <b>Danacord DACOCD 592 £13.99</b>	<b>Tye:</b> Missa Euge Bona etc; Westminster Abbey Choir/O'Donnell <b>Hyperion CDA 67928 £12.99</b>
<b>Dvorak:</b> Complete Piano trios; Gould Piano Trio <b>Champs Hill CHRCD 034 (2 CDs) £10.99</b>	<b>Vaughan Williams:</b> Archive Recordings (5 Tudor Portraits/Wenlock Egde/etc) <b>Albion ALBCD 014 (2 CDs) £10.99</b>
<b>Finzi:</b> Dies Natalis/Britten: Serenade; Padmore/Britten Sinfonia <b>Harmonia Mundi HMU 807552 (SACD) £13.99</b>	<b>Vieuxtemps:</b> Violin Concertos; Hanslip/Royal Flemish Philharmonic/Brabbins <b>Hyperion CDA 67878 £12.99</b>
<b>Glass:</b> Symphony 9; Bruckner Orchestra Limz/Dennis Russell Davis <b>Orange Mountain Music OMM 0081 £12.99</b>	<b>Vivaldi:</b> Sonate da Camera a Tre Op 1; L'Estravagante <b>Naive OP 30535 £12.99</b>
<b>Handel:</b> Alceste; Crowe/Hulett/Early Opera Company/Curnyn <b>Chandos CHAN 0788 £12.99</b>	<b>Vivaldi:</b> Violin Concertos Vol 4; Minasi/Il Pomo d'Oro <b>Naive OP 30533 £12.99</b>
<b>Handel:</b> Atalanta; Soloists/Philharmonia Baroque/McGegan <b>Philharmonia Baroque PBP004 (2 CDs) £19.99</b>	<b>Wagner:</b> Die Walkure; Andersen/Bayley/Bullock/Halle/Elder <b>Halle CDHLD 7531 (4 CDs) £26.99</b>

### DVD NEW RELEASES

<b>Bruckner:</b> Symphony 5; Lucerne Festival Orchestra/Abbado (Lucerne 2011) <b>Accentus ACC 20243 £19.99</b> (Also available on <b>Blu-Ray, ACC 10243, £29.99</b> )	<b>Puccini:</b> La Fanciulla del West; Voigt/Giordani/Gallo/Luisotti (Met) <b>DG 073 4804 £19.99</b> (Also available on <b>Blu-Ray, 073 4808, £21.99</b> )
<b>Cavalli:</b> Il Giasone; Dumaux/Bradic/Sardelli (Antwerp 2010) <b>Dynamic 33663 (2 DVDs) £29.99</b>	<b>Shostakovich:</b> Symphony 8/etc; Concertgebouw/Nelsons (Lucerne 2011) <b>C Major 709 908 £19.99</b> (Also available on <b>Blu-Ray, 710 004, £29.99</b> )
<b>Lehar:</b> Der Graf von Luxemburg; Wachter/Kunz/Goldchmidt (1972 film) <b>Arthaus 101 626 £24.99</b>	<b>R Strauss:</b> Lieder/Alpine Sym; Fleming/VPO/Thielemann (Salzburg 2011) <b>Opus Arte OA1069D £19.99</b> (Also available on <b>Blu-Ray, OABD 7101D, £24.99</b> )
<b>Massenet:</b> Cendrillon; DiDonato/Coote/etc/de Billy (ROH 2011) <b>Virgin 602 5099 (2 DVDs) £19.99</b>	<b>Tchaikovsky:</b> The Nutcracker & the Mouse King; Dutch National Ballet (2011) <b>Arthaus 101 636 £24.99</b> (Also available on <b>Blu-Ray, 108 054, £29.99</b> )
<b>Massenet:</b> Don Quichotte; Van Dam/Santafe/Minkowski <b>Naive DR 2147 £21.99</b>	<b>Verdi:</b> Il Trovatore; Alvarez/Radvanovsky/Hvorostovsky/Armiliato (Met) <b>DG 073 4783 £15.99</b> (Also available on <b>Blu-Ray, 073 4797, £21.99</b> )
<b>Mozart:</b> Piano Concertos 20-27; Barenboim/Berlin Philharmoniker <b>Euroarts 206 6098 (2 DVDs) £29.99</b> (Also available on <b>Blu-Ray, 206 6094, £29.99</b> )	

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# MUSICAL JOURNEYS

Gramophone's monthly search for the best classical music experiences around the world

## *Celebrating Piatigorsky*

Cellists galore converge in LA for the inaugural festival in honour of the legendary player, writes **Laurence Vittes**



Strings attached: massed performers at the Piatigorsky Cello Festival

Despite performances throughout the week of received cello masterworks by world-class cellists, it was a short work by a contemporary composer for 100 cellos that best captured the essence of the inaugural Piatigorsky International Cello Festival. Receiving its West Coast premiere as the final piece on the festival's programme on Sunday March 18 in Walt Disney Concert Hall, Christopher Rouse's eight-minute *Raptured*, scored for multiple cellos in eight parts, is good enough to schedule a cello festival for. After a stirring opening chorale disintegrates into English pastoral sounds, followed by scraping and scratching like interstellar dust and infectious *glissandos* in the manner of Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a hurricane threatens, fanned by tropical breezes, and the dust takes over, triple *forte*, until the mood subsides into waves of consoling peace. The gang of 100 cellists from Los Angeles music schools and orchestras, augmented by masterclass students, visiting artists and former students, played with impressive sound and reasonable unanimity.

The final concert also showcased former Piatigorsky students and the curiously archaic cello repertoire which was Piatigorsky's base – much of it that on most occasions only a cellist's mother could love but only supreme virtuosos can play: Émanuel Moór played by longtime Los Angeles Philharmonic principal Ron Leonard; Rachmaninov by silver tunicked-Mischa Maisky; and Fauré's Second Cello Sonata in a light, lilting reading by Steven Isserlis. The *pièce de résistance* found Laurence Lesser, Nathaniel Rosen, Jeffrey Solow and Raphael Wallfisch scrambling through Piatigorsky's colourful yet intricate four-movement adaptation of Stravinsky's *Suite italienne*.

The festival was the brainchild of Ralph Kirshbaum, holder since 2007 of the Gregor Piatigorsky Chair in Violoncello at the University of Southern California Thornton School of Music, who persuaded first Thornton's enterprising dean Robert Cutietta and then newly named USC president CL Max Nikias to commit to a \$700,000

budget – and to the three years of planning that the event required. Although the festival celebrates Piatigorsky, its presentation by Thornton together with the Los Angeles Philharmonic in partnership with the Colburn School and the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra gave it city-wide impact, while the roster of visiting cellists and former Piatigorsky students gave it international appeal.

Listening to panel discussions and watching multimedia presentations by biographer Terry King, Piatigorsky's legacy as a teacher seems more than ever to be as much about life as about the cello. Whether or not the recounting of his own tales resonated with the students, the professionals filtered the message through their own lens. Jean-Guihen Queyras, for example, who had ignited the festival with a brilliant Haydn C major Concerto on opening night, expressed what Piatigorsky was about as a mentor and might

*'There were more shrieks and screams than most cellists receive in a lifetime'*

have said himself: 'Performing music is in a way the smallest part of the excitement. Like reading Proust or Dostoevsky, first you must play the music for itself.'

Artistic director Kirshbaum explained that the new festival's 10-day length (March 9-18), twice that of the Manchester festivals he ran until 2007, allowed attendees to watch each of the 14 masterclasses. When I asked him how the visiting cellists handled the high-pressure spotlight of playing before colleagues, he told me that 'there was no wish to be competitive in any sense. Rather, this was an opportunity for the Los Angeles music community to come together to celebrate the memory of a great artist who wanted his charges to handle the challenges of life as well as its double stops.'

While the excitement generated among the participants was palpable throughout the festival – shrieks and screams being more numerous than most cellists receive in a lifetime – and a second festival, presumably comprising the same forces, was already being mooted for 2014 or 2015, again under Kirshbaum's leadership, kids in Southern California are not yet taking up the cello like they take up iPhones. But the presence of media, both specialist and general, and from the US and abroad, indicates that the Piatigorsky International Cello Festival has ignited some pent-up demand for classical music in LA.

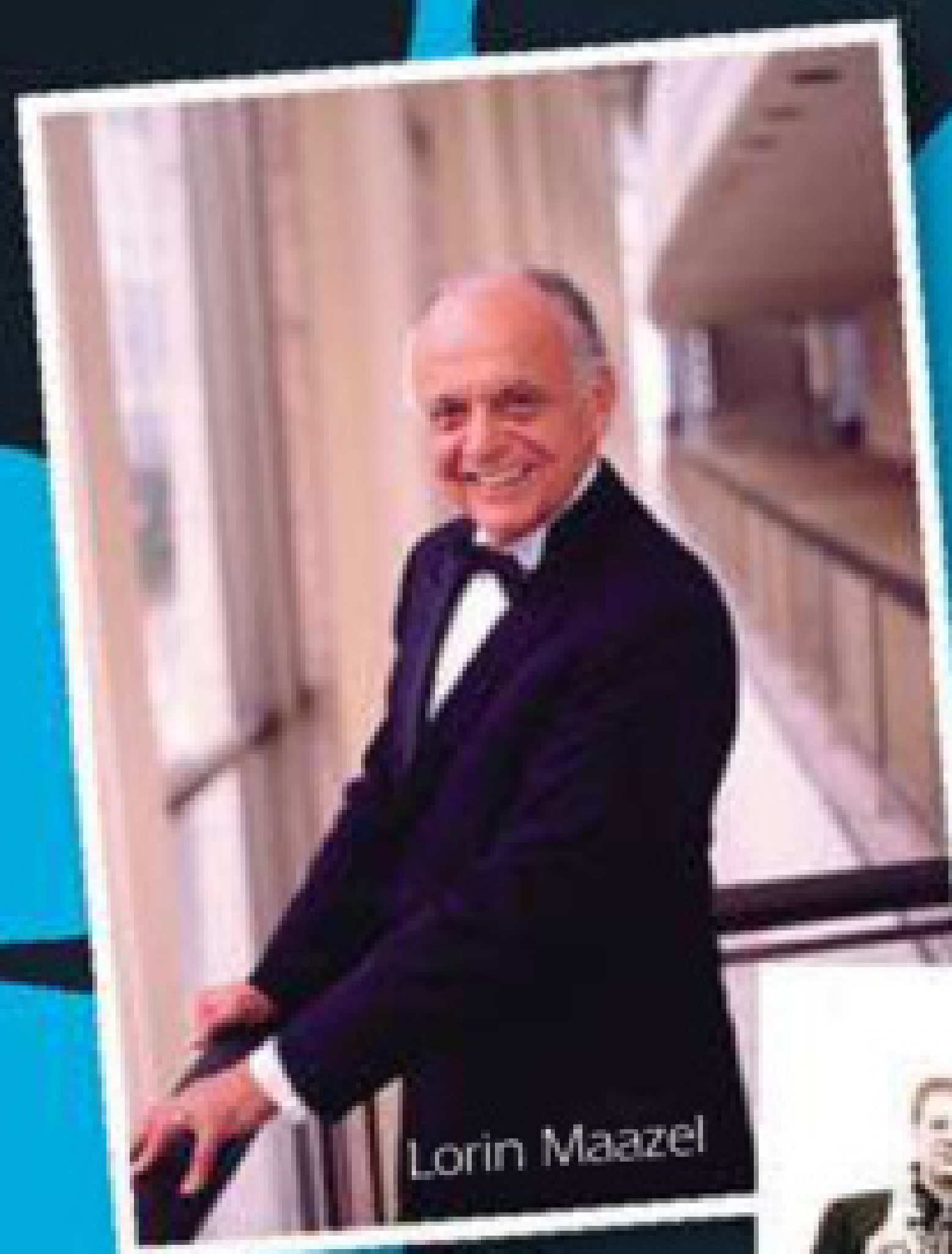
## *Capitole gains*

**Andrew Mellor** hears Toulouse's orchestra in Reading

In a canny refraction of *Gramophone's* list of the world's 10 best orchestras published a few years ago, *Le Figaro* recently ranked every orchestra in France – from the 'best' to the 'should try harder' and the 'disappointing'. I was surprised to see the Orchestre National de Capitole de Toulouse (ONCT) in the



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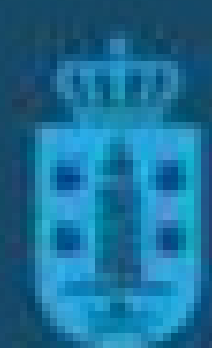
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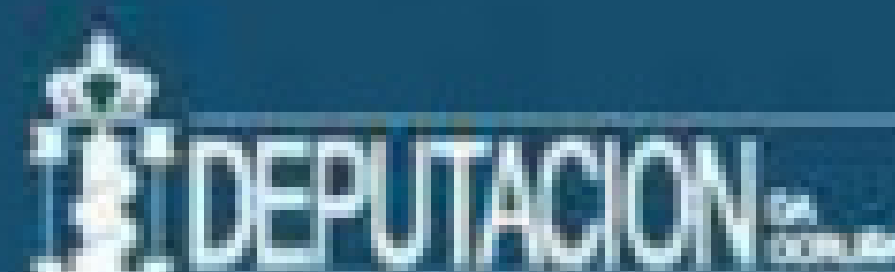
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top three. Not because it doesn't play fine concerts; more because, at home in the six-sided cauldron that is the Halle aux Grains in Toulouse, the ONCT can sound quite abrupt: without the refinement of some of its European counterparts but no less exciting for it.

That's how I approached the orchestra's outing at the Hexagon in Reading – bafflingly its UK debut. In contrast to the Halle aux Grains, the Hexagon's six walls muster zero reverberation between them. You hear everything clearly but with absolutely no aura and no 'help'. As the ensemble tuned up it sounded as though Debussy's *Prélude à L'après-midi d'un faune* was going to be hard work – no

## *Ibragimova's honeyed violin wove across like a ribbon against a barcode'*

impressionistic haze, far more Mondrian than Monet. As it happens, the ONCT showed why it probably deserves its place in *Le Figaro's* holy trinity: it has exceptional sectional rigidity and power, and a satisfyingly peculiar attitude to blend that allowed it to sustain lightness and atmosphere in the *Prélude* through sheer strength. It simply didn't allow any dead air to peep through.

Perhaps there are hints of that strength on those many EMI recordings from the middle of Michel Plasson's 35-year conductorship of the ONCT, when the orchestra was rather more prominent but less well travelled. One characteristic that's certainly different is the string tone. These days it's thick, unvarnished, of utterly uniform hue and tight as you like. In Saint-Saëns's Third Violin Concerto, Alina Ibragimova's honeyed violin wove across it like a twisting ribbon against a straight barcode. It sounds unusual but also highly attractive; the joint project, maybe, of leader

## *The insider's guide*

Gramophone selects June's unmissable musical events

**1 Athens, Megaron**  
The Athens State Orchestra perform works by Beethoven, Prokofiev and Stravinsky with piano soloist Dimitris Sgouros under conductor Vassillis Christopoulos. [megaron.gr](http://megaron.gr)

Philharmonic in Ravel's *Alborada del gracioso*, *Rapsodie espagnole* and *Boléro*, Debussy's *Khamma*, and Saint-Saëns's Fifth Piano Concerto with soloist Jean-Yves Thibaudet. [hkpo.com](http://hkpo.com)

**6 New York, Avery Fisher Hall**  
Pinchas Zukerman conducts and performs Bach's A minor Violin Concerto and Mozart's *Turkish* Concerto with the New York Philharmonic, June 6-9. [nyphil.org](http://nyphil.org)

**9 Leipzig, St Nicholas Church**  
Bachfest Leipzig pays tribute to the late harpsichordist Gustav Leonhardt, with performances by the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra under Ton Koopman of Cantatas Nos 51, 199 and 202 with soprano Dorothee Mields. [bachfestleipzig.de](http://bachfestleipzig.de)

**8 Toronto, Luminato Festival**  
The sixth Luminato Festival runs until June 17 in public spaces across Toronto with theatre, dance, music, literature, visual arts and film. Highlights include a new production of Philip Glass's *Einstein on the Beach*, a multimedia production of *La Belle et la Bête: A Contemporary Retelling*, and pianist Stewart Goodyear performing Beethoven's 32 piano sonatas in a single day. [luminato.com](http://luminato.com)

**10 London, Barbican**  
Bernard Haitink conducts the LSO in two concerts with pianist Maria João Pires on June 10 and 14, featuring Mozart's Piano Concertos Nos 20 and 23. The programmes also include Schubert's Ninth and Bruckner's Seventh Symphonies. [lso.co.uk](http://lso.co.uk)

**8 Hong Kong Cultural Centre Concert Hall**  
Jun Märkl conducts the Hong Kong

**10 Los Angeles, Walt Disney Concert Hall**  
The Los Angeles Master Chorale pay tribute to the late Polish composer Henryk Górecki with his *Lobgesang*, *Five Marian Songs* and *Miserere*. [laphil.com](http://laphil.com)

PHOTOGRAPHY: PATRICE NIN.





Tugan Sokhiev at the helm of the Toulouse Capitole Orchestra

Geneviève Laurenceau and conductor Tugan Sokhiev, both in Toulouse since the late Noughties.

It might well be Sokhiev who's upped the power, too. He conducts like an old-school maestro – big, imposing, in front of the beat and maybe even a touch careless occasionally. But in the *Symphonie fantastique* – even in that sparse, silence-strewn opening to the 'Scène aux champs' – he kept the narrative momentum at the forefront, the shapes obvious and vivid enough to overcome the dead atmosphere. In fact there was great drama in it, perhaps mined from the ONCT's opera work. That was referenced in a terrific encore, Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci* Intermezzo, semaphored out with unbridled *verismo* emotion. A shame the tour didn't take in London – orchestras that can adapt to compromised acoustics and deliver a cracking show are precisely what the capital needs. **G**

## 21 London, St Luke's and Holy Trinity churches

The John Ireland Trust marks the 50th anniversary of the composer's death with a five-day festival in Chelsea (June 21-25). The programme features cellists Julian Lloyd Webber and Jiaxin Cheng, baritone Roderick Williams, pianists John Lenehan and Mark Bebbington, actor Timothy West and the London Soloists Ensemble. [cadoganhall.com](http://cadoganhall.com)

## 22 Boughton Aluph Church

Stour Music, which runs from June 22 to July 1, celebrates its 50th anniversary with appearances from Iestyn Davies, Rachel Podger, Trevor Pinnock, Ex Cathedra, His Majestys Sagbutts & Cornetts and the Hilliard Ensemble. [stourmusic.org.uk](http://stourmusic.org.uk)

## 25 London, Royal Albert Hall

The Royal Choral Society celebrates its 140th anniversary season with a performance of Verdi's Requiem – the choir gave the UK premiere of the work in 1875. This performance features the LPO under Richard Cooke. [royalalberthall.com](http://royalalberthall.com)

## 30 Sydney, Opera House

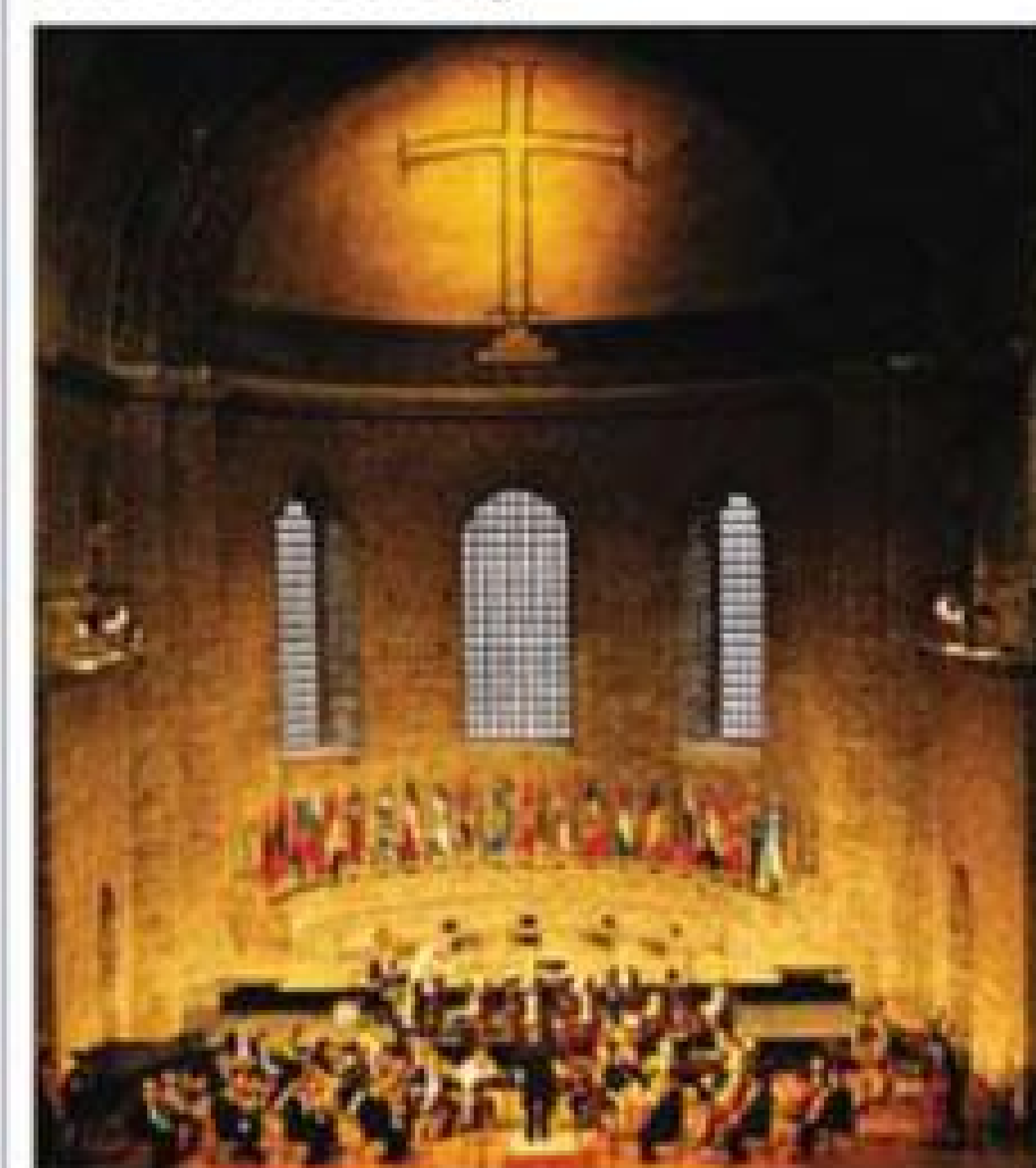
Opera Australia presents the Australian premiere of Korngold's *Die tote Stadt*. Performances take place from June 30 to July 18. [opera-australia.org.au](http://opera-australia.org.au)

## EVENT OF THE MONTH

# May 31 - June 29

### Istanbul Music Festival

The 40th Istanbul Music Festival runs from May 31 to June 29 and features more than 750 local and international artists, including Hélène Grimaud, Anne-Sophie Mutter, Miloš, Gidon Kremer, Daniel Müller-Schott, the Tekfen Philharmonic Orchestra, Sir Roger Norrington and the Warsaw Philharmonic Choir. The festival also features two world premiere commissions from Fazil Say and Giya Kancheli. [muzik.iksv.org](http://muzik.iksv.org)



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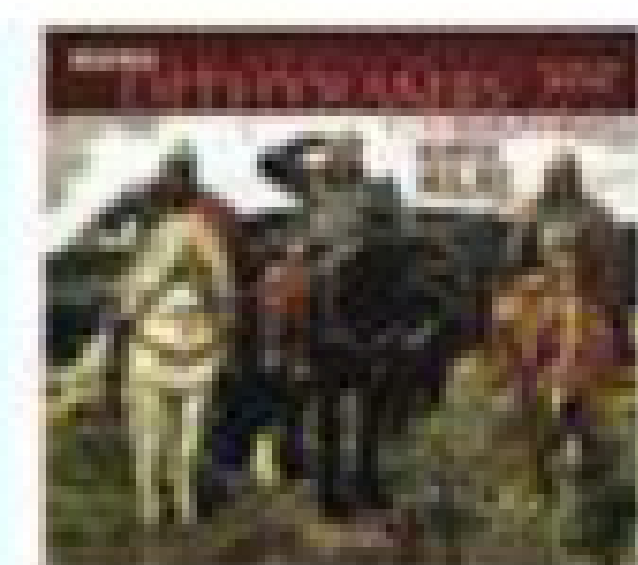
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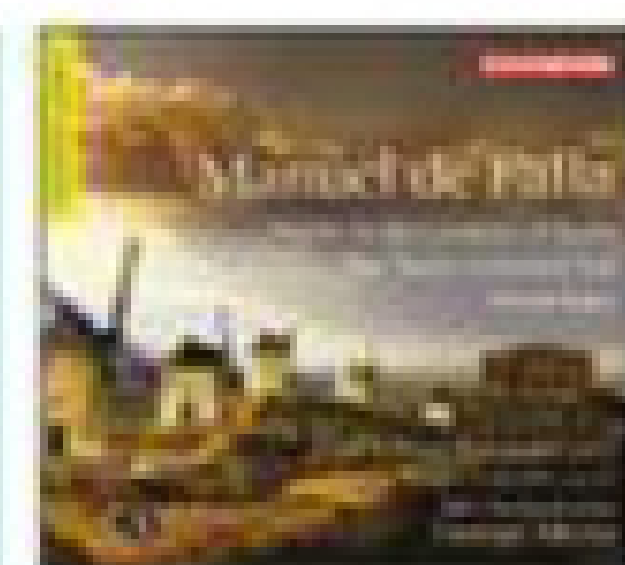
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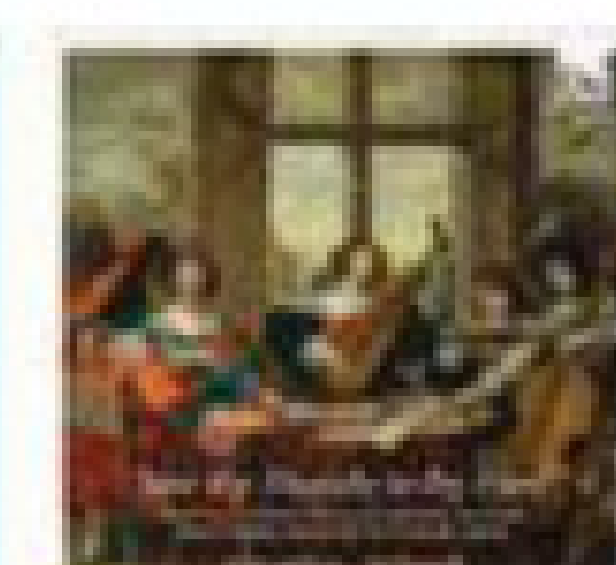
## JUNE'S TEST DISCS



Medtner's music is less well known than it should be, judging from this superb-sounding set by Hamish Milne on Hyperion. It's truly demonstration quality



Scintillating sound and even more exciting performances make this Chandos set of Falla's works for stage and concert hall a must-have, on CD or as a download



Beautifully recorded and performed with soul and precision, this devotional music from Stile Antico and Fretwork is a real test of resolution

## Wireless music – it's now (almost) everywhere!

AirPlay docks, speakers and streaming TVs all offer more ways of listening to music, says **Andrew Everard**



The change in the way we listen to music seems all but unstoppable, as each new product introduction seems to bring an additional means of playing our favourite music in more places and with greater ease.

From receivers to speakers, and from TV sets to desktop radios, wireless music is becoming ever more of a reality, making possible what would once have required lengthy, expensive and messy custom installation – music in any room of the home.

Just about every large-screen TV now comes with a 'smart' variant, able to stream music from a home computer or storage device, and the same facilities are built into most Blu-ray disc players from major players such as Panasonic and Sony. Connect it to a home network and an amplifier, and you have music streaming.

And while the big hi-fi names are adding network music players to their range – the latest is Pioneer, with two models in its new

line-up – the network audio facility is becoming part of the feature-list on AV receivers. For example, the majority of Onkyo's 2012 line-up offers network streaming and internet radio as standard.

But what about standalone solutions? Well, you can fire music direct from an iPod Touch, iPhone or iPad using Apple's AirPlay to a whole host of speaker dock systems, including a neat panel speaker from TEAC, the NS-X1 or the striking-looking Philips Fidelio SoundSphere speakers.

Or, should you want a truly invisible solution, QED's custom-installation Systemline brand will sell you its Airway speaker system: two in-ceiling speakers with AirPlay and amplification built in, allowing you to walk into a room with your handheld iOS device and have instant music.

Yes, without any other components!

The way we all listen to music may never be the same again. **G**

- 1** Wireless music made simple: this is the striking **Philips Fidelio SoundSphere** system
- 2** **Onkyo** is majoring on streamed music, in both home cinema receivers and stereo products
- 3** **TEAC's NS-X1** is a simple dock system but with the addition of Apple AirPlay connectivity
- 4** You can even add music and video streaming with a Blu-ray player such as this **Panasonic**
- 5** **Pioneer** is the latest company to add streaming 'tuners' to its range: the NP50 is the top model
- 6** Hideaway hi-fi? **Systemline's Airway** speakers will play straight from an iPhone or iPad



## ● REVIEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

# Pro-ject Box Design Stream Box DS

The name's a mouthful but this network player is a real contender, says **Andrew Everard**

Pro-ject's 20th anniversary celebrations last year were memorable for several reasons: one was a superb celebratory concert of Mozart, Haydn and Schubert, given by the Vienna Classical Players in the Schubertsaal of the Vienna Konzerthaus. Another was the inspirational overview given by founder Heinz Lichtenegger of how the company is trying to drag retailers kicking and screaming into the 21st century. The third was the potential shown by the fast-growing Box Design sub-brand, and in particular the streamer/player we have here.

Pro-ject, in case anyone needs reminding, is the company often credited with creating the turntable revival: Lichtenegger tells the story of the Czech girl he met at a party who'd brought along a record player rescued from the skip behind the factory back home where her uncle worked. That turntable, and the factory in Litovel, became key to the whole Pro-ject story.

These days the company sells 40,000 turntables a year, not to mention 250,000 of its phono preamplifiers to date, but it all started because so much music was available almost free in second-hand and charity shops, on LPs discarded by people switching to CD. Just as Lichtenegger identified that potential back then, so he's now encouraging his retailers to abandon the 'serious hi-fi' world's prejudice against all things with an 'i' at the front of their name and embrace the new ways people are accessing, storing and listening to music.

Box Design has a range of Dock Box models, allowing iPods and iPhones to be connected to hi-fi and home cinema systems: the £130 Dock Box Fi is the latest version of the original, with a fixed-level analogue



### PRO-JECT BOX DESIGN STREAM BOX DS NETWORK MUSIC PLAYER

**Price** £699

**Formats played** MP3, FLAC/WAV (up to 24bit/192kHz), WMA9-lossless, AAC, Ogg Vorbis 1.0

**Internet radio platform** vTuner

**Network connection** Wi-Fi IEEE802.11b/g, Ethernet

**Inputs** 2xUSB 2.0 (for memory devices and digital connection of iPods/iPhones/iPads)

**Outputs** Stereo analogue, electrical digital on RCA phono

**Accessories supplied** Wi-Fi antenna, remote handset

**Finishes** Black or silver

**Dimensions** (WxHxD) 20.6x7.2x19.4cm

**project-audio.com**

**henleydesigns.co.uk**

output to run into an amplifier, while £25 more buys you the Dock Box Vi, with remote-control variable output to connect straight to an amplifier or active speakers, and £200 takes you to the Dock Box S Digital, complete with onboard digital-to-analogue conversion and, should you need it, a digital output to feed an offboard converter. If you want to play music from memory devices, the £249 Media Box will handle USB drives and SD memory cards; if, however, you want to explore internet radio, and music streamed over a home network, then the Stream Box DS, at £699, is the solution.

Compact – it's just under 21cm wide, a bit less than 20cm deep and not much more than 7cm tall – the Stream Box DS is built around a large colour display and housed in Box Design's high-quality 'S' series casework. There's just one control on the front panel – for on/standby – and the connections are similarly pretty simple: there's a choice of wired Ethernet or Wi-Fi networking, front and rear USB sockets for memory devices or

direct digital connection to iPhones, iPods and iPads, and a choice of stereo analogue or digital audio outputs. Power comes from a plug-top adapter, and a remote control handset is supplied. It will play a wide variety of audio formats, from humble MP3s right up to 192kHz/24-bit WAV and FLAC files, and offers built-in vTuner internet radio and gapless playback.

### PERFORMANCE

The Stream Box is quick and simple to set up: it found the home Wi-Fi network and was soon connected, although I stuck to wired Ethernet for most of my listening, purely for stability's sake. It worked well enough with a wide range of file types over wireless, not suffering any drop-outs or losses when relatively close to the router, but with its ability to stream 192kHz/24-bit content, I have to say I'm happier with it connected using cables.

While the large, clear display makes it easier to use the system across the room



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## SUGGESTED PARTNERS

We're keeping it compact this month, creating the modern micro system

### PRO-JECT STEREO BOX S

This minute amplifier – just over 10cm wide and less than 4cm tall, yet still delivering 30W per channel – is, at £199, the perfect partner for the Stream Box



### NEAT IOTA

Reviewed last month, the sensational Iotas sell for £650/pr and are sensitive enough to be used with an amp as compact as the Stereo Box S



with the remote supplied, there's a range of alternative methods of controlling the system. You can use the Plug Player app on iOS and Android devices (which will cost you £2.99), or the free SongBook Lite, to set up playlists and fire them at the Pro-ject. And while there's no Apple AirPlay compatibility, the free MediaShare Lite 4.0 sends music wirelessly from iOS and Android handhelds to the Stream Box. Finally, Jamcast – available as

MP3 files and internet radio stations all the way through to high-resolution music from the likes of Chandos, Decca, Linn and Norwegian label 2L, and in every case its combination of weight and detail-retrieval served the music very well indeed.

It doesn't quite have the spine-tingling quality of a considerably more expensive player when handling a high-resolution file but there's excellent weight in the bass,

**As well as being compact and classy-looking, the Pro-ject is a notable sonic step up from entry-level streaming hardware**

a free trial, or \$29.99 thereafter – will let you send the audio from a PC to the Pro-ject.

It's worth noting at this point, however, that while the Stream Box DS will indeed play gaplessly when you set an entire album running using its own remote control, setting it to play using these external services gave rather more unpredictable performance, with a noticeable gap between tracks.

There is an iOS/Android control app on the stocks from the company behind the streaming solution used here, so hopefully this can be customised to give full operation of the player. But the immediate lack of a dedicated control app shouldn't detract one little bit from what is one of the more attractive and well-sorted network music players out there.

It's also one of the neatest, occupying only half the shelf-space of most of the 'full-size' rivals. Despite that, it has one of the largest displays, able to show not just track titles at a decent size but also album artwork.

And, as well as being simple to use, the Pro-ject also sounds rather good: I used it with a wide range of music from low-bitrate

clarity in the midband for voices and solo instruments, and a respectable amount of sparkle in the treble to bring out the ambience of a recording.

That generous, well-controlled balance means the Pro-ject is tolerant of lower-resolution files, smoothing out some of their brittleness, while at the same time more than able to make clear the benefits of shovelling more data into it. Listening to the Trondheim Soloists' 'Souvenir Part I' release at a variety of bitrates, from 320kbps MP3 all the way up to 192kHz/24-bit FLAC, there was never any doubt that the Stream Box DS was making more of the higher-resolution files, and doing so to thrilling effect.

This little box is an excellent buy: as well as being compact and classy-looking, it's a notable step up from the entry-level streaming hardware now becoming available. In a market where products seem to arrive and immediately have their price slashed, it more than justifies its £699 tag.

If you're thinking of adding streaming or internet radio to your system, I strongly suggest you give it a listen. **G**

## DESIGN NOTES

### Heinz Lichtenegger

Founder and General Manager, Pro-ject

#### On getting audio priorities right, and reinventing hi-fi

As a boy, Heinz Lichtenegger was taught classical music by a teacher with a quadraphonic sound system who took his pupils to concerts – 'so I was in the Opera and the Musikverein at the age of 16.'

Money earned working at a petrol station was spent not on the motorcycles his friends bought but on audio equipment: 'Yes, they could take girls out on their bikes, but when it was raining I was indoors with the girl and the music!'

His early listening was mainly jazz but that led to an exploration of Beethoven and Schubert, and Puccini's *Tosca*. These days his greatest delight is the Vienna Philharmonic at the Musikverein – 'each evening's better than the last'.

The Box Design range is about forming the bridge between computers and hi-fi:

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'That's what has to change unless hi-fi is to be lost to the internet; that's the trend I am fighting with Pro-ject and Box Design.'



**'Dealers need to demonstrate systems to fascinate the new generation of consumers'**

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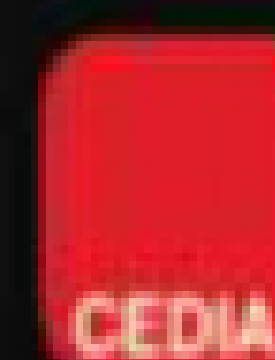
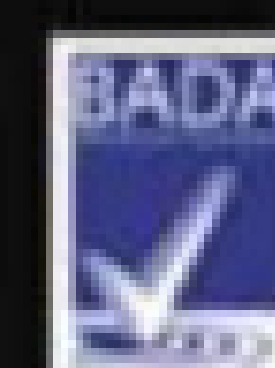
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## ● REVIEW DESKTOP AUDIO

# Audyssey Lower East Side Media Speakers

These compact powered speakers have a weighty presentation, says **Tony Williams**

The Audyssey name will be familiar to buyers of home cinema receivers: its automatic set-up and equalisation systems allow the user to hook up a microphone, press a button, and let the technology do the rest.

The company has a mission to 'EQ Everything' with its Audyssey Tuning System, has worked with Toshiba to create a suite of sound-enhancing technologies – known as Audyssey Premium Television – used in the company's latest sets, and even provided the technology for the set-up of the audio system in the Range Rover Evoque.

The company also has its own range of consumer products, with names acknowledging fashionable areas in US cities: its first, an iPod speaker dock, was dubbed SoMa after San Francisco's South of Market area, and the speakers here carry the Lower East Side name, to keep New Yorkers happy.

The speakers themselves, selling for around £180 through the likes of the Apple Store, are of a compact powered design, standing some 23cm tall on their integrated stands. They have a choice of analogue stereo or optical digital input, plus a headphone output, just one control – push for on/off, twist for volume – and come with both a 3.5mm stereo connecting cable and wire to connect the second, passive speaker to the active one.

There's a 19mm tweeter and 7.5cm mid/bass unit, the latter aided by a 10cm passive bass radiator on the rear of each enclosure. And within is a sound tuned using the company's Audyssey EQ system, BassXT – which monitors the signal and constantly adjusts to make the most of the bass drivers' capabilities – and Dynamic EQ, to compensate when listening at low levels.



### AUDYSSEY LOWER EAST SIDE MEDIA SPEAKERS POWERED SPEAKERS

**Price** £180

**Drive units** 19mm treble, 7.5cm mid/bass, 10cm passive bass radiator

**Inputs** 3.5mm stereo analogue in, optical digital input

**Outputs** 3.5mm headphone output

**Accessories supplied** 3.5mm-3.5mm interconnect, cable to connect speakers

**Dimensions** (HxWxD) 23x12.4x17.3cm  
**audyssey.com**

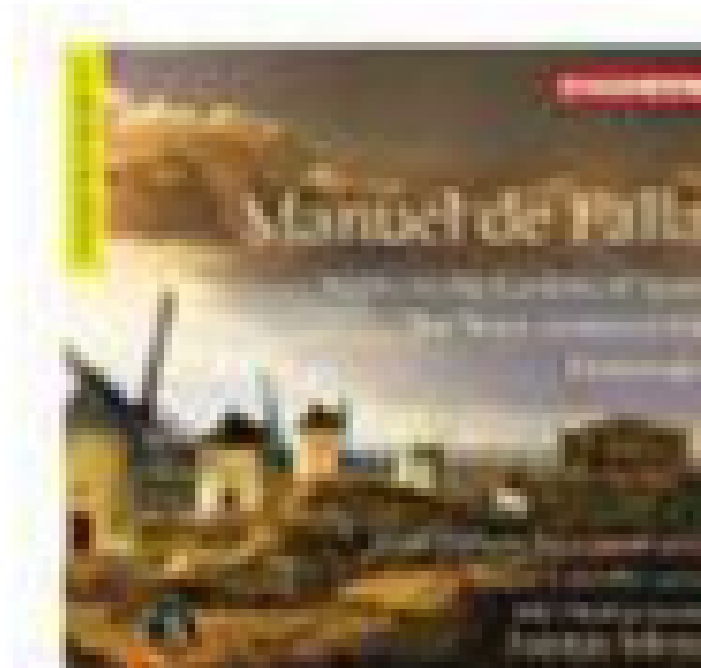
### PERFORMANCE

These are desktop speakers and the design, tilting the enclosures back on their integral stands, 'aims' the speakers at the ears of a seated listener when the Audysseys are used as intended. A little toe-in doesn't go amiss in firming up the stereo image and, if your desk is against a wall, will also avoid those passive bass radiators over-reinforcing the low end. That's important: these Media Speakers certainly aren't short of bass: their sound is big and rich, with more than sufficient oomph in the lower frequencies to make orchestral works sound big and satisfying. Arguably these speakers have been tuned more for rock and pop music but Audyssey has resisted the temptation to partner that big bass with stinging treble, and has thus come up with a design able to deliver a lush but well-detailed sound even at low volume levels.

Comparing the two inputs was interesting: the analogue, fed from the headphone output of my MacBook Pro computer, was enjoyable enough, if a little dry and gritty. Switching to the optical digital in, again fed from the computer's combination 3.5mm socket using a 2m optical cable bought for the princely

sum of £6, was rather more entertaining, with better detail and an increased sense of three-dimensionality. I enjoyed the ability of the speakers to create a sound stage picture apparently in front of one's eyes and ears, rather than down at desk level where the enclosures sat: you don't have to 'listen down' to the speakers, which can prove fatiguing with some desktop designs.

The design of the packaging in which the Audyssey arrives and the red 'go faster' stripes might suggest these aren't speakers designed with the classical enthusiast in mind. But their weight, balance and affordable price mean they're well worth a listen if you're looking for a desktop audio solution. **G**



### HOW TO TEST...

If you're using the speakers with your laptop, take it along for the audition loaded with some demanding music: the recent Chandos release of Falla's music, 'Works for Stage and Concert Hall', should show how well the Audysseys control their rich bass and the detail they deliver.

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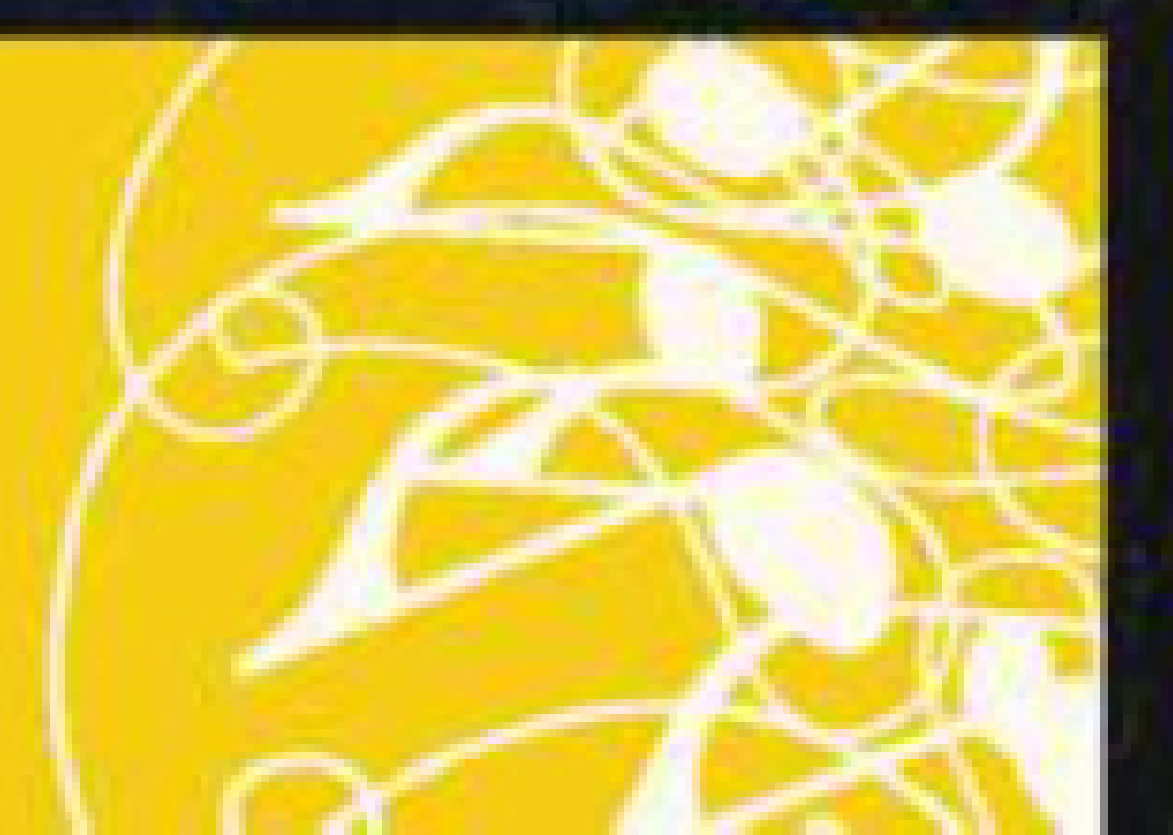
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# 'Whether Ministry of Sound or the St Matthew Passion, the gapless problem is the same...'

Classical collectors are the ideal users of streaming solutions, says **Andrew Everard**, so why is so much network audio hardware still not serving us music as it should be played?

The warning to 'mind the gap' is a monotonously familiar announcement on the London Underground, and presumably is soon to be delivered in multiple languages to save stumbles, twisted ankles or worse among the thousands of Olympic tourists due to descend on the capital.

Trains and platforms were designed at different times during the near-150-year history of the tube, so they don't quite fit together – and that can catch out the unwary. A bit like music and digital streaming systems, then – except the history is rather shorter.

It has a lot to do with the way home digital music storage has evolved. Initial players were little pocket machines designed to hold a number of tracks for listening on the move but, as has been noted in these pages before, there are areas in which the audio industry is failing the classical listener.

The major – but not only – problem is the awkward gap between tracks when ripped or downloaded to digital storage, then played back on many a network hi-fi player. These track-gaps aren't a problem when listening to pop songs, which are designed as separate tracks, but they play havoc with an operatic or symphonic work recorded as a number of tracks, with the music flowing straight through across the track-breaks. Instead of a seamless flow, you get an awkward silence of a few seconds, sometimes in the middle of a phrase, making the work all but unlistenable.

Yes, I know in the old days of 78s one would have had to turn or change discs several times to get through one movement of a work, but in 2012 those gaps are a pain, not least because they don't have to be there. After all, there are players able to go straight through a work, only observing the 'natural breaks' such as those between movements, and it isn't a facility only available at the high end of the market. Naim's network players do it, as do Linn's, and so do inexpensive solutions such as Logitech's Squeezebox models, not to mention iPods and the like. Even online music streaming service Spotify now does gapless playback if you want.

Yet a large number of players are still unable to handle the gaps between tracks smoothly, as you'll have gathered from some of the recent reviews here. Manufacturers



Simple devices such as the Logitech Squeezebox Touch do gapless, so why do some hi-fi solutions struggle?

tend to say it's a problem they'll address in future firmware upgrades, or in some cases say no one has ever raised the subject before.

That's a surprise: as much as the problem afflicts classical music listeners – and we may be in the minority of buyers – so it also annoys those whose musical taste extends to 'dance mix' albums, in which a celebrity DJ combines many tracks into a seamless flow of music. Or rather doesn't, if each track is separate and the player doesn't 'do gapless'. Whether it's the *St Matthew Passion* or the Ministry of Sound, the problem's the same.

So why are there gaps? It's to do with the encoding of tracks and the way the player handles them: the player has to work out what encoding has been used, then set itself to decode the audio. And the 'more encoded' it is – ie the greater the data-reduction – then (to simplify greatly) the harder the decoder needs to work on the 'reconstructive surgery'.

For those reasons, you're more likely to get gapless playback if your tracks are stored in a lossless form – either as FLAC or Apple Lossless – but there are other factors involved, such as the encoding software used to create the tracks in the first place, the media server software being used and so on.

It's frustratingly hit and miss, but the fact is that some players manage to stream so

The fact is that some players stream so seamlessly that their owners must wonder what the fuss is about – so why can't they all?

seamlessly that owners must wonder what all the fuss is about – so why can't they all?

I mentioned that this isn't the only problem facing the classical music enthusiast. While we're at it, can we sort out all the metadata stored when music is downloaded or ripped? I'd so like to be able to find all my music with a simple composer/work/performance or orchestra/conductor search, rather than having to remember in exactly which order the encoding decided to list the performers and then do the Sherlock Holmes bit to find the work I'm after.

Yes, I know I can go into the metadata with an editing programme and adjust the labelling to get somewhere near my ideal, but that's all a bit too Heath Robinson for my taste, and life's really too short.

A mass of information about every recording is out there – so, streamer manufacturers, can we please start using it? **G**





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# NOTES & LETTERS

More on Mahler's Resurrection • The Klinghoffer controversy • Harry and Parry

## Gramophone's Hall of Fame

Thank you for the initial *Gramophone* Hall of Fame (May, page 23). Such lists are always a hostage to fortune as everyone will have favourite artists who they would like to see in such a list. Nevertheless, I was amazed at how little argument I had with myself about the initial 50.

The most notable missing conductor for me is Sir Charles Mackerras, both for bringing Janáček and other Czech music to Western opera houses, concert halls and recordings, and for his amazingly broad discography, much of which comprises recordings regularly picked as reference.

I also think that the revival of the countertenor voice has been a major element in the early music movement and should be recognised – perhaps through James Bowman, whose career on stage, concert platform and studio has been long and important. Likewise, Emma Kirkby should be there.

*Tony Richards, via email*

## Mravinsky missed out

One person I think is seriously missing from the *Gramophone* Hall of Fame is Yevgeny Mravinsky. His performances of Tchaikovsky's Symphonies Nos 4, 5 and 6 should be in any collection. Surely this must be a mistake. Many of my friends and family think that this is also a serious omission.

*Paul Craven, via email*

## Backroom boys remembered

I note the *Gramophone* Hall of Fame was to recognise 'the people whose talent, vision and genius have shaped the classical record industry'.

You have failed to realise that the record industry, pop as well as classical, was the result of the inventive genius of several people who created the products that brought music into our homes. The conductors, singers and musicians are all laudable in their contributions, which rose on the back of the inventive genius of Thomas Edison (the phonograph), Alan Blumlein (long-playing records and stereo), Alexander M Poniatoff (multitrack tape recording), the Philips compact cassette and so on, without which innovations in recorded music would not have happened.

## Letter of the Month



Heroine of the bow: Ida Haendel in Prague in 1958

## More violin greats

I much enjoyed Rob Cowan's 'Unsung heroes of the bow' (Specialist's Guide, March, page 88), especially in view of the individualised styles and temperaments of those great under-regarded violinists he recalled. Articles like these are always vulnerable to wholly understandable omissions. So please allow an addendum of

a further 10 notables, for which I am sure Mr Cowan would find no argument: Ida Haendel, Ruggiero Ricci, Henryk Szeryng, Arthur Grumiaux, Ginette Neveu, Albert Sammons, Josef Suk, Oscar Shumsky, Michael Rabin and Max Rostal.

*James Manishen  
Winnipeg, Canada*

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It is just a little annoying that inventors get the least reward but it's very annoying when the inventors that made it all possible are excluded from recognition by an industry and magazine that only exists due to their creative genius.

Alan Perry

Ex-EMI engineer, via email

Thank you for all the many comments we received about the Gramophone Hall of Fame. Don't forget, we'll be inviting you to vote again next year when we'll honour a further group of people who have changed classical music recording history. If there are particular people who you would like to see on the longlist, please do let us know. – Ed.

## Mahler's Second Symphony

I enjoyed Simone Young's Musician's Diary (April, page 15) for its insights into her career and her current work. But I was puzzled by her remark that Mahler's Second Symphony was 'conceived here' (in Hamburg).

It's hard to know exactly when the Second Symphony was first conceived but it was at any rate well before Mahler took up his post in Hamburg in 1891. Sketches headed 'Symphony in C minor' date from as far back as 1888, though at that point Mahler got no further than a single movement and changed the title to *Todtenfeier* ('funeral rites'). He seems to have envisaged this as a kind of symphonic poem, programmatically depicting the death rites of the 'Titan' of the First Symphony. But eventually he re-focused on the idea of the Second – it may be no coincidence that he made revisions to the First at around this time – and composed further movements for it in summer 1893. It's true, as Ms Young says, that he couldn't complete the work until he heard a setting of Klopstock's 'Resurrection' sung at the funeral service for Hans von Bülow in St Michael's Church on March 29, 1894. It's equally the case that this was 'just' the final completion (though what a completion!) of a compositional process going back many years.

How ironic that this long-awaited consummation should come during the funeral rites of the very man who, two-and-a-half years previously, had covered his ears with his hands while Mahler played the *Todtenfeier* movement to him. The two men seem to have got on well and von Bülow greatly admired Mahler's conducting but, when it came to this composition by Mahler, the older man confessed: 'If this is music, then I don't understand music any more.'

Christopher Judson  
Edinburgh, UK



Controversial? John Adams's *The Death of Klinghoffer* continues to generate debate

## Scene changes

In the article on John Adams ('An American Idol', April, page 28) appear the words: '*The Death of Klinghoffer* (1991) ran afoul of pro-Israel cultural forces in New York but has survived to be acknowledged as one of his finest and most subtle works.' This statement is, I believe, a half-truth. I remember reading in the *New York Times* an article by Frank Rich in which he criticised a scene at the end of the opera in which Klinghoffer's Jewish neighbours in the US talk approvingly about the bargain price Klinghoffer received for his cruise. The neighbours are unaware that Klinghoffer has been murdered by terrorists on that cruise. This strikes me not so much as anti-Israel as anti-Jewish, as it revives the slur that Jews are only interested in money. I believe the scene was removed from the opera as a result of protests from Jewish groups, not just pro-Israel protests. I would appreciate your confirming or denying whether my memory is correct.

Frank Boardman

Woodhaven, Athens, GA, US

*That's correct. John Adams deleted the scene to which you refer because it was deemed 'inappropriately satirical' by some, accompanied by accusations of anti-Semitism.*

## Financing Capitol

I appreciate Philip Clark's article on the pathbreaking early recordings of the Juilliard Quartet (April, page 61); however, I must contest several of his statements, notably that Frank Sinatra's recordings subsidised the classical department, and that it was so

extraordinary that Columbia would record something as advanced as the Bartók and Schoenberg quartets.

To begin, Sinatra's career was having a severe rough patch at that time and he left the label shortly afterwards. His Capitol recordings helped to revive it. But, more importantly, Columbia's classical division had been recording Broadway musicals since the mid-1940s and had released the original cast albums of *Kiss Me, Kate*, *South Pacific* and *The Pajama Game*, among others, and were to record *Kismet* and *My Fair Lady*, so the classical division was financing itself.

In the late Thirties and early Forties, Columbia Masterworks had recorded Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire*, conducted by the composer, a far more audacious act than recording the Bartók quartets. It had also recorded the Fourth Violin Sonata and Second Piano Sonata by Charles Ives. And it had made the premiere recordings of Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra and Third Piano Concerto, as well as an album of Bartók piano music played by the composer. It was committed to what was then contemporary music.

Finally, about the contention that the Bartók recordings were pre-tape: Columbia was one of the first companies to use tape for its recordings. The recording of *South Pacific* was done on tape and wax blanks simultaneously, and the last Sony CD release used the tape master. This was done right at the time the Bartók quartets were recorded, so I believe their masters were on tape.

I hope this does not sound like a rant. I found the article interesting and informative. I was just troubled by the



'hooks' to get the immediate attention of the reader. I would think the subject itself would be sufficient.

*Joseph Cooper*  
Santa Barbara, CA, US

## Birtwistle and Parry

So he heard some Parry on the telly did Sir Harry and found that it wasn't English at all but entirely rooted in Schumann and Brahms (April, page 36). Rather touching that he should then feel the need to share his astounding discovery 'conspiratorially' with *Gramophone* readers as if nobody else had yet noticed this shocking fact! Fine, except that (to paraphrase Brahms himself) it's easy enough to unpick a composer's musical DNA and still miss the essence of what he's really saying. As the culprit who first sent Prince Charles a disc of Parry orchestral premieres in 1992 (Nimbus NI5296), I'm tickled now to find that His Royal Highness seems to have heard more in this music than has, er, Sir Harrison Birtwistle. It couldn't have anything to do with the distant German ancestry of The Prince of Wales – could it?

*Geraint Lewis*  
Cardiff, UK

## Depth of vision

What an excellent essay about 3D television sets (April, page 107) and the way that, after a reasonably short lifetime, they are found to be nothing like as wonderful as they were originally cracked up to be. The reason for this is that they are nothing more than stereoscopy, whereas for genuine 3D you would need holography. This is far, far more complicated than mere stereoscopy, so complicated and so expensive that I doubt if it will ever become commercially viable, in the same way that stereoscopic still photography, starting in the 19th century, has never progressed. I doubt if 3D motion photography will do any better. Thank you, Mr Everard, for saying what needed to be said so lucidly and succinctly.

*Henry Smith*  
Tasmania, Australia

## Plugging Pflüger

In May's New Releases (page 148) one of the entries is a 1949 recording of Rimsky-Korsakov's opera *Sadko* on the Gala label. Now why on earth should someone be interested in a 63-year-old performance of a Russian opera by a little-known German company that, so far as I know, never made it on to LP? Well, the music is exceptionally beautiful. But the real reason is that the conductor of this performance,

Gerhard Pflüger, was an extraordinarily fine conductor, the equal of Abendroth and superior to Konwitschny and Masur, to name but two, both fine conductors in their own right. Those who possess his recordings, mostly on the Urania label, know what I mean. His Dvořák Fourth (Eighth) is the equal of any performance by Talich and others but his performance of the *Scherzo* is in a class by itself, heartbreakingly beautiful.

*Ben Cutler, via email*

## Recording in Indianapolis

I was very pleased to see the Zuill Bailey/Märkl/Indianapolis Symphony recording of Dvořák's Cello Concerto on Telarc reviewed as a 'Gramophone Choice' (May, page 77). I was equally pleased that Ivan March enjoyed the recording quality of the CD release. The Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra organisation strives to have its new recordings made with the highest production values and has contracted with our company, Five/Four Productions, to produce and engineer this latest series of recordings. Mr March noted in his review that Telarc had made the reviewed recording. While we were the nucleus of the Telarc production department for many years, we have been operating an independent audio production company for nearly four years. One of our most recent sessions was with Ben Zander and the Royal Philharmonic recording Mahler's Symphony No 2 at Walthamstow. We also just completed the Elgar Cello Concerto, again with Zuill Bailey. Incidentally, Telarc Records no longer has production capacity to produce new recordings itself.

*Michael Bishop*  
Recording engineer/producer, via email

## Editorial notes

We mistakenly captioned a photo in Bryce Morrison's round-up of Chopin releases (April, page 67) as Ivan Moravec, whereas in fact it was Jerzy Godziszewski. The real Ivan Moravec is pictured below.



The right pianist: Ivan Moravec

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## Proms Special issue

Our in-depth guide to this year's BBC Proms, joining in their celebration of...

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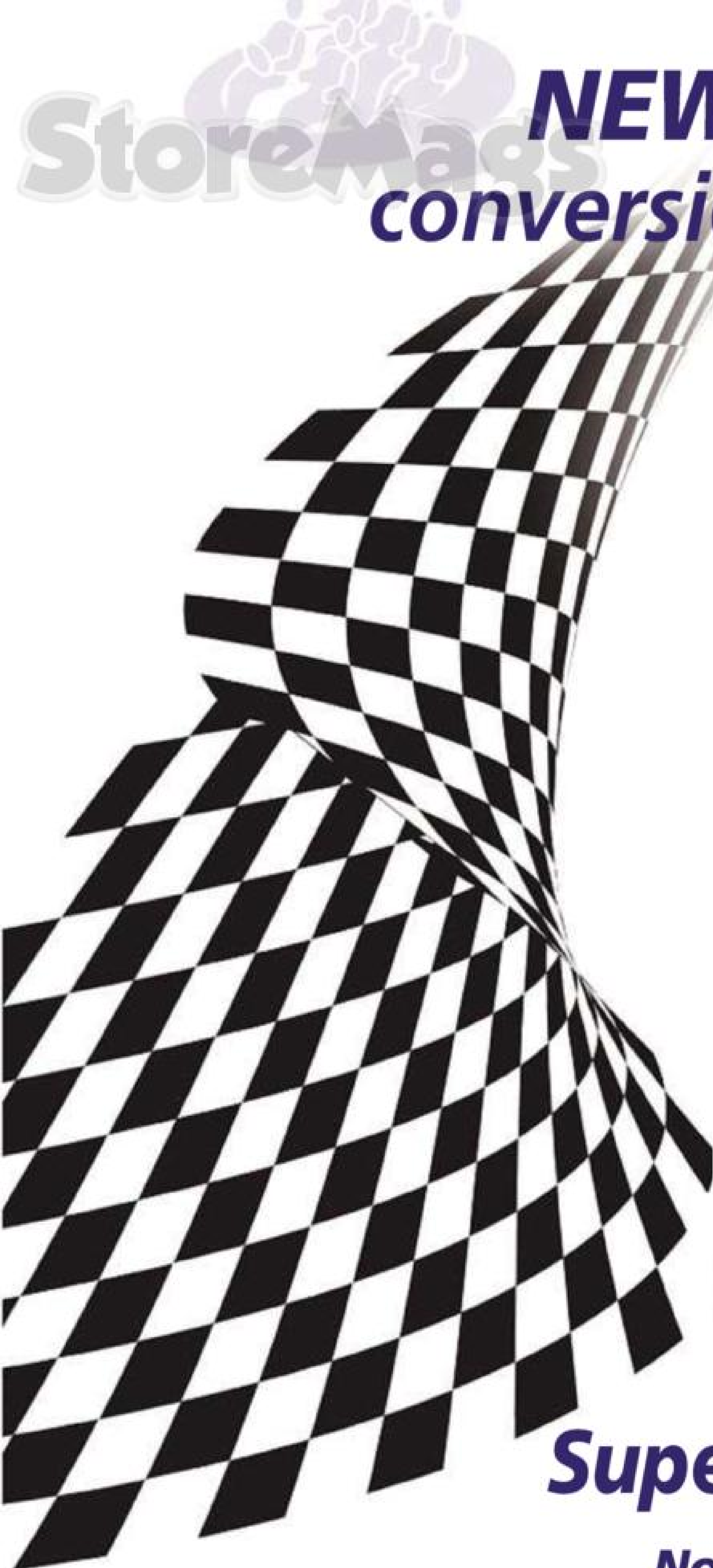
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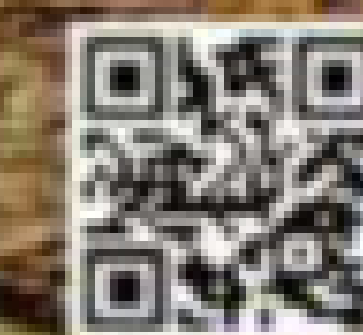
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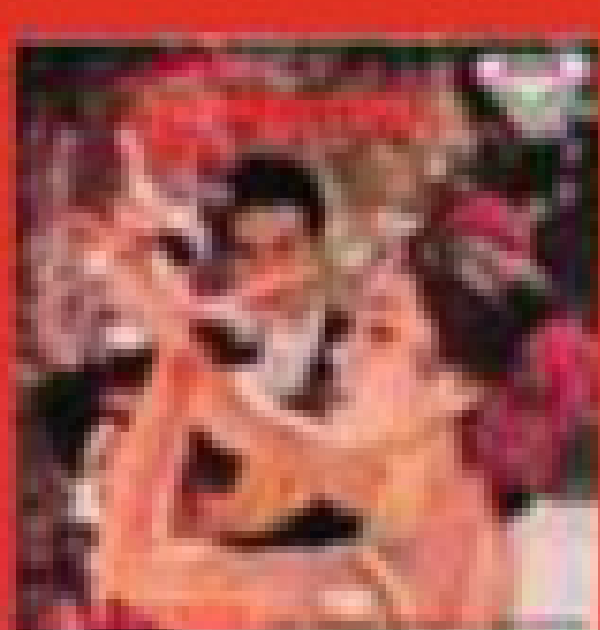
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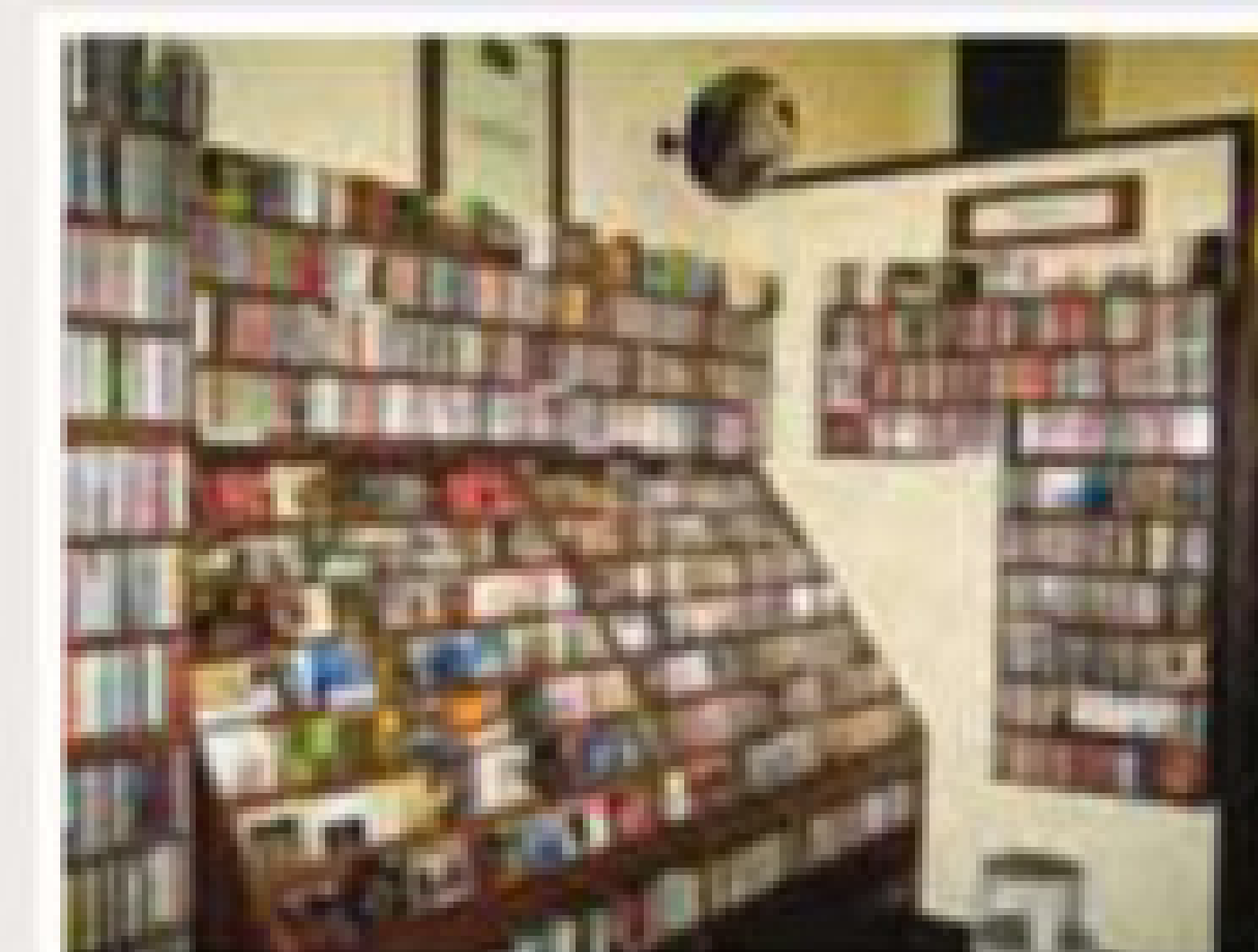
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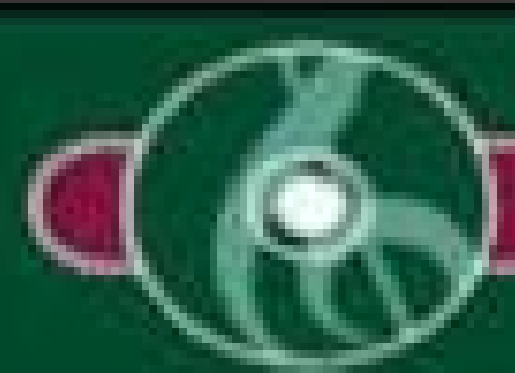
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On Wings of Song, Op 34 No 2 <b>58</b>	Villanelle for Piccolo and Piano <b>61</b>	Piano Sonatas – Nos 4, 13 & 21 <b>71</b>	Piano Quartet, Op 67 <b>63</b>	
Piano Trios – Nos 1 & 2 <b>61</b>	Violin Sonata <b>61</b>	Piano Sonata No 21, D960 <b>69</b>	Piano Trio No 1 <b>63</b>	
Symphony No 4, ‘Italian’ <b>93</b>	<b>Prokofiev</b>	Polonaise, D580 <b>49</b>	Violin Sonata No 2, ‘Sonata española’, Op 82 <b>63</b>	
Violin Concerto, Op 64 <b>46</b>	The Love for Three Oranges – March <b>58</b>	Rondo, D438 <b>49</b>	<b>V</b>	
<b>Merula</b>	Piano Sonata No 8 <b>71</b>	Symphony No 8, ‘Unfinished’ <b>49</b>	<b>Vaughan Williams</b>	
Canzone quinta a quattro detta la chremasca <b>65</b>	Scythian Suite, Op 20 <b>55</b>	<b>Schubert/Liszt</b>	Flos campi <b>53</b>	
Capriccio cromatico <b>65</b>	<b>R</b>	Gretchen am Spinnrade, D118/S558 No 8 <b>73</b>	The Lark Ascending <b>53</b>	
<b>Messiaen</b>	<b>Rachmaninov</b>	<b>Schulhoff</b>	On Wenlock Edge <b>53</b>	
Poèmes pour Mi <b>83</b>	Elégie, Op 3 No 1 <b>73</b>	Ogelala – Suite <b>55</b>	Serenade to Music <b>51</b>	
<b>Mompou</b>	Etudes–tableaux, Op 39 – Nos 4-6 <b>73</b>	<b>Schumann</b>	Symphony No 2, ‘A London Symphony’ <b>51</b>	
Piano works (various) <b>69</b>	Piano Concerto No 2 <b>42, 93</b>	Album für die Jugend, Op 68 – No 30 <b>58</b>	<b>Verdi</b>	
<b>Monteverdi</b>	Piano Concerto No 3 <b>47, 93</b>	Concert–Allegro with Introduction, Op 134 <b>49</b>	Ballet Music from Aida, Don Carlo, No 2, Curiose Geschichte; No 7, Träumerei <b>58</b>	
L’incoronazione di Poppea <b>87</b>	Piano Sonatas – Nos 1 & 2 <b>71</b>	Fantasia in C <b>93</b>		
<b>Mortensen</b>		Fantasia, Op 17 <b>71</b>		
Evolution, Op 23 <b>46</b>		Introduction and Allegro appassionato, Op 92 <b>49</b>		
Per orchestra, Op 30 <b>46</b>		Kinderszenen, Op 15 – No 1, Von fremden Ländern und Menschen; No 2, Curiose Geschichte; No 7, Träumerei <b>58</b>		
Pezzo orchestrale, Op 12 <b>46</b>				
Symphony, Op 5 <b>46</b>				
<b>Mozart</b>				
Piano Concerto in D minor <b>92</b>				



# Marcus du Sautoy

The mathematician, Charles Simonyi Professor for the Public Understanding of Science, and Maestro conductor on his lifelong love of music and numbers

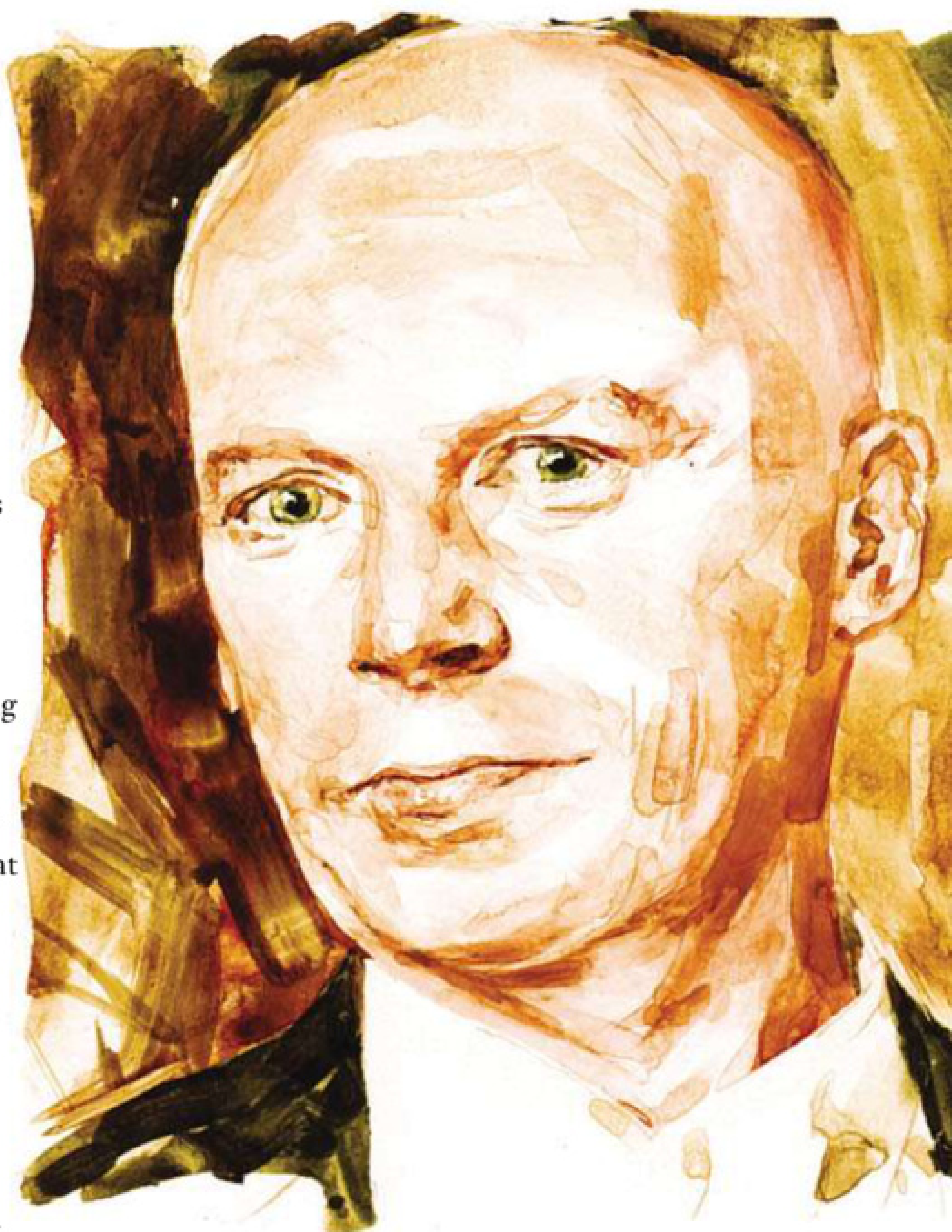
I remember my music teacher at school at the end of a lesson saying, 'Does anyone want to learn an instrument?' And I thought, 'That sounds fun!' Three of us raised our hands and she took us to the music storeroom cupboard, which was bare except for three trumpets. I really fell in love with the trumpet. I was quite a scrawny 12-year-old when I started, so an important part of my trumpet practice was to do 20 press-ups before my scales and arpeggios so that I could hold the trumpet up! Later, I went up to university in Oxford and I just immersed myself in the world of music; I was playing two or three concerts a week.

**When I started learning** the trumpet my mum also started learning the flute. In fact, my parents fell in love with classical music at the same time as me. I remember that they would take me to Wagner operas in Oxford when Glyndebourne were visiting and it was their first time at the opera too. I really thank my parents so much for that – we went on the musical journey together.

**My grandfather was chairman** of Faber and Faber and he knew Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears very well, as they published Britten's music. When he retired, he moved to Aldeburgh and he was very involved in the Britten-Pears School. One day he took me up to the Red House and the librarian there said, 'Oh, you're learning the trumpet are you?' and he brought out a copy of the *Fanfare for St Edmundsbury* – a piece by Britten for three trumpets – which is now one of my favourite pieces of music.

**When I was 13 I sat** through a complete performance of *Tristan und Isolde*, and I just loved it. I am particularly drawn to Wagner because the use of leitmotifs is a very mathematical approach to music: the idea that you can decode what is going on dramatically through the music that you're hearing, and you can understand that the plot is developing because two leitmotifs have come together and are interweaving – well, that's very much like the architecture of a mathematical proof.

**I listen to a lot** of music when I'm doing my mathematics: I think it complements my work and the thought processes are very similar. There's a kind of pattern-searching that you do in mathematics that is similar to what you do when you're listening to music. As you navigate your way through a piece of music, which is wholly abstract, you are applying a sort of mathematical analysis even if you are not consciously aware of it. One of my favourite composers is Messiaen; he put extraordinary mathematics into his music. There's a piece called 'Île de feu 2' (from *Quatre études de rythme*) for piano, and if you look at the two 12-tone rows that he uses and view them mathematically, they generate a symmetrical object which is one of the most important in our subject. But, interestingly, he was drawn to those two rows for purely aesthetic reasons – and that's just beautiful. But sometimes he consciously uses maths. Take



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the *Quartet for the End of Time*, for instance. In the first movement ('Liturgie de cristal'), the piano part is based on prime numbers – a 17 rhythm sequence and a 29 harmonic sequence – to create a sense of unease and timelessness. Messiaen knew exactly what he was doing.

**I'm a big opera fan** so, for me, *Maestro at the Opera* is a dream gig, but I've learnt that you have to have total control on the rostrum. As my mentor Paul McGrath says, 'Don't let the music take you over.' When I first conducted, we were given an aria and I remember closing my eyes and just loving the music. I talked to the musicians afterwards and they said, 'You got lost in there and you didn't connect with us!' So it's a funny job, you must maintain total control, but that is sometimes difficult when you love the music so much! *Maestro at the Opera* is broadcast on May 4, 11 and 18 at 9pm on BBC Two



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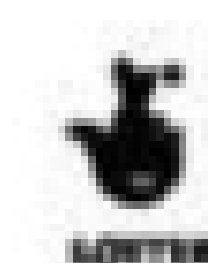
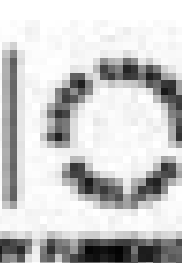
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